

“The Sinner and the Savior”

(Luke 5:1-11)

Introduction

➤ In reading some of the Gospel narratives about Jesus’ calling of the apostles, it can appear as though the apostles immediately dropped everything and followed Jesus after their first encounter with Him. But that is simply not the case. To be sure, as we will see this morning, their devotion to Jesus was extraordinary, but they did not capriciously follow Jesus.

Christ’s calling of the apostles happened in three stages (although Scripture does not record each apostle’s individual encounter with Jesus):

- 1) Conversion (John 1:35-51) ~ They first came to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to be disciples of Christ.

John 1:35-42 ~ “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, ‘What are you seeking?’ And they said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ ³⁹He said to them, ‘Come and you will see.’ So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter).”

- 2) Ministry (Matt.4:18-22; Mk.1:16-20; Lk.5:1-11) ~ Sometime later (some suggest about a year later), they were called abandon their occupations follow Jesus in ministry – which they did.

Matthew 4:19-20 ~ “And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” (Mk.1:17-18; Lk.5:10-11)

- 3) Apostleship (Matt.10:1-42; Mk.3:13-19; 6:7-13; Lk.6:12-16; 9:1-6) ~ Once all the Twelve were assembled, Jesus commissioned them to be His apostles – which literally means “sent ones.” Jesus gave them the authority to preach, to cast out demons, and to heal the sick.

Mark 3:13-15 ~ “And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵and have authority to cast out demons.” (Lk.6:12-16)

➤ As we turn our attention the passage for the sermon this morning, we can see that it describes the second stage (“ministry”) of the apostles’ calling. While all three synoptic Gospels contain this narrative (Matt.4:18-22; Mk.1:16-20), none are as detailed as the account from Luke’s Gospel.

Luke 5:1-11 ~ “On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ²and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ ⁵And Simon answered, ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.’ ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ ⁹For he and all who were with him

were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

- This biblical narrative unfolds like a back-n-forth tennis match – for every action there is a reaction. To help us understand the passage, I have divided it into five different sections.

1. The Setting (vs.1-2)

- In verse one, we find Jesus still in Galilee (northern region of Palestine), *“by the lake of Gennesaret”* (vs.1; i.e., the Sea of Galilee). This prominent freshwater lake is approximately thirteen miles wide and seven miles long, and almost seven-hundred feet below sea level. Much of Jesus’ ministry, and miracles, were around and on the Sea of Galilee.

The disciples had been following Jesus for some time now, listening to Him preach and teach, and watching Him perform miracles. And, as we have seen, Jesus’ popularity was increasing seemingly exponentially as crowds gathered around Him by the thousands and (potentially) tens of thousands. They gathered to experience and witness His miracles, but also to hear Him teach and preach.

↳ The response:

- The response to Jesus’ teaching was typically intense. On this particular *“occasion”* (vs.1; *ginomai de*; “it happened that”), a crowd had gathered to *“hear”* Jesus teach (or preach) *“the word of God”* (vs.1). It truly cannot be stated often or clear enough that Jesus did not teach anything but *“the word of God”* (vs.1). He did not preach politically charged or psychologically driven sermons. He did not appeal to people’s self-esteem or teach *“to suit their own passions”* (2Tim.4:3). Jesus – the incarnate Word of God (Jn.1:1-3, 14) – taught the inspired Word of God (2Tim.3:16-17)!

As we have seen, Jesus taught the Bible and preached *“the good news of the kingdom of God”* (Lk.4:43; see Lk.4:18-19; 8:1; 24:27, 44; Matt.4:17; Mk.9:35) – as did the apostles (Lk.9:2; Matt.10:7), and all his disciples (Lk.9:60).

1 Cor 1:17 ~ “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

1 Cor 1:22-22 ~ “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.”

1 Cor 9:16 ~ “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

2 Tim 4:1-4 ~ “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

Rom 1:16 ~ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

- The crowd was so large, and so eager to hear Him, that they were *“pressing in on him”* (vs.1). With the Sea of Galilee to His back, Jesus needed to do something in order to be heard by the large crowd: *“he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets”* (vs.2). Seeing the two boats, with *“Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother”* (Matt.4:18) finishing up their night of fishing, Jesus had an idea.

2. The Request (vs.3)

- Jesus got *“into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land”* (vs.3). This does not seem to be a big request, and it really was not. However, Peter had been fishing all night with nothing to show for it (vs.5). He was likely exhausted and frustrated. Peter had worked *“all night”* (vs.5), and no one would probably blame him if he just wanted to go home and go to bed.

They had already *“wash[ed] their nets”* (vs.2) which indicates they were done for the day and ready to fish again that night. Taking Jesus out into the lake, so that He could teach, could take hours. Jesus did not merely want to borrow Peter’s boat; Jesus *“asked”* (*erōtaō* [aor., act. ind.]; cf. Lk.4:38) Peter to take Him in his boat *“a little from the land”* (vs.3).

↳ The response:

- The response from Peter is implicitly stated in the text. Peter agreed to Jesus’ request as Jesus *“sat down and taught the people from the boat”* (vs.3). Peter believed that Jesus was the Christ, and he willfully agreed to take Jesus out into the lake. Jesus would use Peter’s large fishing boat as His pulpit, and the lake as a natural amphitheater, allowing Him to be heard by the large crowd that had gathered. This was not the only time that Jesus taught this way (see Mk.4:1).

3. The Command (vs.4-5)

- The time came *“when [Jesus] had finished speaking”* (vs.4), and – at least in my mind – Peter was probably thinking, “Now I can go home and go to bed.” There is no doubt that Peter was captivated by the divine authority of Jesus’ teaching (Lk.4:32), but Peter had presumably been up all night. The night had not gone as Peter hoped, and (so far) this day had not gone as Peter expected.

In verse three, Jesus asked Peter if he would take Him out on the lake. In verse four, Jesus was not asking: *“he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch’”* (vs.4). The verb *“put out”* (*epanagō*) is in the “imperative mood” which often indicates a command [same verb in verse 3 (*“to put out”*) is in the infinitive mood]. Jesus gave Peter a direct order.

- It is important to note that Jesus did not want Peter to drop a fishing line, or even to cast one net. They were large and heavy nets used fish in deep waters. He told Peter to go back out *“into the deep”* (vs.4) and *“let down”* all of their *“nets for a catch”* (vs.5). Jesus essentially told Peter to start his night all over again – after Peter had washed, and possibly mended, all the nets making them ready for another night of fishing.

↳ The response:

- How did Peter respond? Peter said, *“Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!”* (vs.5). First, notice that Peter did not call Jesus “Rabbi” (*rhabbei*) or “Teacher” (*didaskalos*) or even “Lord” (*kyrios*), but *“Master”* (*epistatēs*; “commander” or “overseer”) which could literally be translated “one who is set over.” This word is used only seven times in the New Testament, and all occurrences are found in Luke’s Gospel (5:5; 8:24^{x2}, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13). This was a term of great respect, and while not a denial of Jesus’ deity it was not an affirmation of His deity either (see vs.8). As we will see, Peter’s address of Jesus as his *“Master”* was neither dishonest nor insincere.

But Jesus’ command was hard to hear. For Peter, and the other disciples, had *“toiled all night”* (vs.5). The Greek verb translated *“toiled”* (*kopiaō*) comes from a word that means “to cut” indicating one being weary from labor, even to the point of physical exhaustion (see Jn.4:6; Col.1:29).

They had already fished *“all night”* and caught *“nothing”* (vs.5; *oudeis*; not one thing). From a fisherman’s perspective, this made no sense at all. And Peter was a professional, seasoned, fisherman. The best time to fish was at night, when it was cooler and the fish would be closer to the surface. Since they caught nothing at night, it was very unlikely that they would catch anything in the day. Any reasonable fisherman would “call it a day” and try again that night.

In fact, any reasonable fisherman would not take fishing advice from a carpenter's-son-turned-Rabbi. But Jesus was no mere man, and Peter regarded Jesus as his *"Master"* (vs.5).

- Even though Jesus' command made no rational or logical sense, Peter said: *"But at your word I will let down the nets"* (vs.5). There is hardly a better response to Jesus than this: *"at your word"* (vs.5). This is unconditional obedience. Peter completely surrendered to Jesus' command. Even though he was exhausted, frustrated, and skeptical, He did as Jesus commanded. It made no sense to Peter, but Peter knew that it did not have to make sense. His master gave Him an order, and he was to follow that order.
- Jesus' commands are not suggestions. He is not merely a counselor giving us advice that we can accept or reject. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Holy One of God. He is the one and only Son of the Most High God. He is our Savior and our Master.

We must not disobey or disregard the commands of God. We must not only obey the commands that we think are reasonable or culturally/politically acceptable. We must not only obey when it makes sense to us, or when we agree that it is a good thing to do.

Luke 6:46-49 ~ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." (see Matt.7)

Luke 7:7-9 [the centurion who's servant was dying] ~ "Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

John 14:15 ~ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

John 15:14 ~ "You are my friends if you do what I command you."

John 14:21-24 ~ "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. ...

²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me."

1 John 2:3-4 ~ "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

⁴Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him"

1 John 5:2-3 ~ "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

- How often do we respond conditionally to Jesus' commands – limited by our own wisdom, stifled by our own perspectives and desires, constrained by our anxieties and fears, controlled by our personalities, relationships or society?

4. The Miracle (vs.6-10a)

- What happened next, when Peter and the disciples let down their nets, was nothing short of a miracle: *"And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink"* (vs.6-7). This catch was so "over-the-top" that it sounds like a "fisherman's tale." If not witnessed by so many people, no one would believe it.

The nets Peter used were no small or fragile nets. They were made for this kind of fishing (they were just cleaned and likely mended). And yet, they nets could not hold up (*“the nets were breaking”*; vs.6) under the weight of the *“large number of fish”* (vs.6; *“number”*; *plēthos*). Clearly, Jesus commanded the fish into the nets. As the (incarnate) Son of God, Jesus is sovereign over all creation – including the fish of the sea (see Col.1:15-18; Heb.1:1-2; Jn.1:3).

Jonah 1:17 ~ “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

Neh 9:6 ~ “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.”

Ps 135:6 ~ “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

➤ Not only were the nets breaking but *“the boats”* (vs.7; note the plural!) were sinking. This was definitely a miracle – and the disciples knew it!

↪ The response:

➤ Peter’s obedience, mixed with doubt, quickly turned to amazement mixed with holy fear. *“But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon”* (vs.8-10a). Peter dropped before Jesus in a posture of abject humility. His doubts tormented him, and his sins condemned him!

When Peter exclaimed, *“Depart from me”* (vs.8; *exerchomai apo egō*; “go away from me!”) he was pleading with Jesus for mercy. Peter knew he was unworthy to be in the presence of God. Peter knew that Jesus not only had authority over every disease and demon, but also ruled the fish of the sea. Peter had no doubts that Jesus is God, and that certainly terrified him. For Peter knew that he was a sinner in the presence of the holy God. Peter knew he was unholy and in the presence of the Holy One!

✓ Illust: “Rock of Ages”, written by Augustus Montague Toplady (in 1776):

“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to the cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die.”

Luke 18:13 ~ “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’”

Judg 13:21-24 ~ “The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. ²²And Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen God.’ ²³But his wife said to him, ‘If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.’”

Job 42:5-6 ~ “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ⁶therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Isa 6:5 ~ “And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost [*dāmā*; ruined, destroyed, undone; self-disintegrating]; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’”

Ezek 1:28 ~ “... Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.”

Rev 1:17 ~ “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. ...”

➤ Luke records for us that Peter was not the only one in reverent awe of Jesus: *“For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon”* (vs.9-10a). They all were *“astonished”* (vs.9; *thambos*; struck with wonder, dumbfounded, surprised with fear; see Lk.4:36; Acts3:10), and they were all *“afraid”* (*phobeomai*; vs.10b). They were a mixture of terror and wonder, fear and reverence, shock and awe.

➤ Thankfully, Jesus was merciful and gracious to the would-be apostles. They would soon learn Jesus is both holy God and loving Savior. Those who reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior ought to be terrified, for if they do not repent they will be eternally and justly condemned (Jn.3:18, 36; Heb.12:29). However, those who truly receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God – that awful fear turns to an awesome reverence) for they knew that they are saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ alone!

This is illustrated on another occasion (a couple years later, after Jesus was crucified and risen from the dead), when Peter again experienced a miracle on the Sea of Galilee:

John 21:3-8 ~ “Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, ‘Children, do you have any fish?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ ⁶He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.”

➤ While these two narratives (Lk.5:1-11 and Jn.21:3-8) are very similar, they are also vastly different. After the miraculous catch of fish in Luke, Peter said: *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”* (Lk.5:8). A couple of years later, after another miraculous catch of fish, Peter *“threw himself into the sea”* (Jn.21:7) in order to swim to Jesus. Peter first wanted Jesus to get away from him, and second Peter could not get to Jesus fast enough.

What made the difference? Simply put, Peter came to know Jesus not only as Holy God but also as Loving Savior. He knew that he was a sinner, but a sinner saved by God’s grace. His fear had turned to reverence; his terror had turned to peace; his trepidation had turned to adoration.

5. The commission (vs.10b-11)

➤ Jesus responded to the disciples’ appropriate fear with a calming assurance and divine mandate: *“And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men’”* (vs.10b). The Greek verb translated *“catching”* (*zōgreō*) specifically refers to capturing someone/something alive
✓ Illust: “They had spent their lives catching fish for the purpose of killing them; now they would spend the rest of their lives catching men to give them life” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 5:10b-11).

Luke 24:45-48 ~ “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

Matt 28:18-20 ~ “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

Acts 1:8 ~ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- As Christians, our commission from Christ is local and general, cultural and cross-cultural, narrow and wide, at home and abroad. Geographically, the disciples would have understood the progression of Jesus’ commissioning (cf. Acts 1:8): “Jerusalem” (their city), “Judea” (neighboring area), “Samaria” (extended area), and “to the ends of the earth” (farthest and remotest parts of the world). Today, we could express our calling something like this: we are to be Christ’s witnesses in Coos County, in Oregon, in the U.S., and in the world – or at home, at work/school, in our nation, and all of the earth. Like ripples on a lake caused by the plunge of a rock so too we as Christians (Christ-followers) we should be spreading the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- As disciples we are, in this sense, called to finish the work that our Master began. Jesus has not only given us the mission but provided us with the message, the might, and the means as well. As disciples of Jesus, we are to carry out the work that Jesus did. We are to love as He loved, speak as He spoke, and live as He lived. Jesus has called us to make disciples of Jesus. Surely this is a high and holy calling. One that we must not take lightly and one that we dare not forsake or ignore. Through Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit, God and given us the responsibility and privilege to aid in bringing sinners to repentance and instructing them in the ways of Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Illust: “... the work of evangelism, of spiritual lifesaving, is nonetheless the purest, truest, noblest, and most essential work the church will ever do. The work of fishing men and women out of the sea of sin, the work of rescuing people from the breakers of hell, is the greatest work the church is called by God to do” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew*; 4:18-22).

↳ The response:

- That miracles changed everything for the disciples: “*And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him*” (vs.11; see Matt.19:27; Mk.10:28). The disciples “*immediately*” (Matt.4:22; Mk.1:20), without hesitation or question, the disciples quit their jobs and entered into a life of Christian ministry.

Luke 9:57-62 ~ “As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ ⁵⁹To another he said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ ⁶⁰And Jesus said to him, ‘Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ ⁶¹Yet another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ ⁶²Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

- While every Christian is not called to a full-time Christian vocation, every Christian is called to a full-time devotion to Christ!

Conclusion

- As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God – our “*Master*” (vs.5) and “*Lord*” (vs.8) – and as such we ought to obey Him unconditionally. He has called us all to be evangelists. He has commanded all believers – not just pastors and missionaries – to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, Jesus’ last earthly words (Acts 1:8) are not meant for academic study but for obedient living. In His “Great Commission” (Matt.28:18-20), Jesus commands the church to live, love, and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet. Evangelism is not only something that every believer can do, but something that every believer should be doing! It is truly our greatest mission in life – the most important work we can do.

Therefore, failing to obey Christ's Great Commission is failing to fulfill the number one assignment from our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. When it comes to the Great Commission, Christian can respond in one of only two ways: 1) We can obey it, or 2) We can disobey it. Telling and teaching others about Christ is not only the church's primary responsibility, but also one of our greatest privileges.

➤ We have been given our marching order from our commanding officer. As a church, if we fail to carry out our number one mission from God we are, in a sense, a failed church. We dare not be too consumed with good things while we forsake the best things. May we continue to be encouraged to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission. We may only be ordinary Christians, but we truly serve a Great God!

✓ Illust: An unknown author wrote that on a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought for their safety, they went out day and night, tirelessly rescuing the lost. Many lives were saved so the station became famous.

Some of those who were saved, along with others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station. They gave of their time, money, and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, new crews were trained, and the lifesaving station grew. Some of the members were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided, so they replaced the emergency cots and beds and put better furniture in a new, larger building.

Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members. They decorated it exquisitely because they used it as sort of a club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do the work.

The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held. About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where the shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the lifesaving activity because they thought it was a hindrance and unpleasant to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted on lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out they were still a lifesaving station after all. They were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of various kinds of people shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast, which they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that coast today, you'll find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent, but most of the people drown.

➤ If we are not proactively vigilant, we can easily lose sight of our Great Commission. This church, or any church, is not "evangelistic" simply because it has an evangelistic pastor or a great evangelism program. Churches are evangelistic when the people of the church are going out into the world in which they live, work, and play and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.