

Your Defining Moment!

Luke 5:4-11

In 1923, a twenty-one-year-old artist sat in a cramped office in Kansas City, watching his dreams crumble. He had poured every ounce of his creativity into a venture called Laugh-O-Gram Films, only to watch it collapse into bankruptcy. He was so broke he had to wash up at the local train station and eat cold beans out of a can just to survive. To everyone watching, that failure looked like a dead end. But it was just a redirection into something unimaginable.

The young man gathered what was left of his life—a tattered cardboard suitcase and exactly forty dollars—and bought a one-way ticket to Hollywood. He didn't arrive as a mogul; he arrived as a man who had lost everything but his vision. That day Walt Disney thought he was walking away from a disaster, but he was actually walking toward a future that would eventually reshape the imagination of the entire world. He would go to Hollywood and introduce his character he had been imagining for decades, Mickey Mouse.

Today, we are talking about the "Black Clouds" in our own lives. We often pray for God to take away the storms, forgetting that it is the wind of the storm that carries us to the place we were always meant to be. If you are sitting here today feeling like you've failed, or like your "Laugh-O-Gram" has just gone bankrupt, take heart: Your forty dollars and your suitcase are enough when you place them in the hands of the One who specializes in new beginnings.

Today we jump into a story of man experiencing pressure, problems and personal failure. His name is Simon Peter. He is the best known of all of Jesus' disciples. There is more written about him than all the other disciples combined. Whatever he did, he did in a big way. If he had a success, it was a big one. If he had a failure, it was a big one. He had a big, impulsive, demonstrative love for the Lord Jesus. On the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, he said, "Lord, it's good to be up here, let's stay here." Matthew 17:4

On one occasion he declared, "*You are the Christ, the son of the Living God.*" Matthew 16:16

He cuts off Malchus' ear in the garden.

He denies Jesus three times.

He walks on water.

He sinks in faithlessness.

He outruns another disciple on the way to view the empty tomb.

He jumped out of a boat two times to go to Jesus.

He loved Jesus and wanted to be near Him.

His brother Andrew introduced Simon to Jesus.

Today we're going to look at Luke chapter 5, "*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*" Luke 5:1-3

Simon Peter and his business partners had pulled their boats up on shore and were washing their nets. This was something that professional fishermen on the Sea of Galilee had to do. After you had finished fishing all night in the Sea of Galilee, you had to wash your nets, because your livelihood depended on it. They would wash the nets, oil the nets, hang the nets up to dry, and get them ready for the next night of fishing, because everything depended upon those nets.

They had to work just as hard preparing the nets and cleaning up their boats whether they caught a lot of fish or no fish. They had to work just as hard either way. On this particular night, they had worked hard all night long and hadn't caught a thing. When God is getting ready to do something amazing in your life, He starts by giving you a problem, and when God is getting ready to do something really, really amazing in your life, He starts by giving you a problem, an impossibility.

If they didn't catch any fish, they couldn't provide for their families. I'm sure they must have felt discouraged, working so hard and not being effective at all. They had to have been filled with worry. They had to have been flooded with anxiety just thinking about how they were going to pay the bills. How were they going to feed their family?

The source of provision walked into their lives at just that moment. While they're washing and hanging up their nets after a long night of not catching a thing, Jesus, the Provider, walks into the picture. Jesus walks right into the point of their need. He's right there when you feel the most anxious. He's right there when you're more discouraged than you've ever been. He's right there when you feel more overwhelmed than you can ever remember. He meets us right where we are so He can meet the deepest need in our lives. But the disciples didn't realize it at the time. They knew Jesus walked onto the scene, and they knew they were desperate, but they didn't connect the two, that Jesus wanted to meet them in their desperation. He was there to provide exactly what they needed, but they didn't realize that He was the provider.

What is it that you need most today? Maybe it's a financial need. Maybe it's a need in your family or a need in your job. Maybe it's a need in your life that's just so painful you can barely speak about it right now.

We all carry burdens. We all have pain. We all have hidden hurts and problems. Jesus shows up in the most desperate places in your life, and He wants to show you that He's real and that He loves you.

Through the encounter of Jesus with Simon Peter we learn a lot about what God wants to do in us this new year!

1. Leave A Shallow Life And Move To A Deep Faith.

“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Launch out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’”
Luke 5:4

The movement from shallow water into deeper water is an analogy of what Jesus was going to do in Simon's life. He was living a shallow, meaningless life. Jesus was going to take Simon from his superficial, half-hearted, and casual attention to a deep, personal, and real commitment. Jesus pushes us to take us from where we are to where He wants us to be.

Jesus was saying, “I'm going to do this amazing thing for you if you do this and take a step of faith.” Peter and the professional fishermen who fished in the Sea of Galilee knew, if you wanted to catch fish in the Sea of Galilee then you've got to fish in the shallows in the cool of the night. Sometimes, you'd have to go across the lake and risk your life in one of the storms that would come up unexpectedly, but you had to do that to get to the place where the fish were biting, there in the shallows in the cool of night.

Jesus is telling Peter, “I want you to fish in the heat of the day in the deep water,” and it made no sense to Peter. It went against everything that he had experienced. It's important for us to understand, because we really only experience the miracle of provision when we take a step of faith and obey God even when we don't understand it completely.

We want God to explain everything to us. And Jesus said, “Simon Peter, I want you to go fish in the heat of the day and the deep water,” and Simon Peter was thinking, “That's not going to work.”

This wasn't the first time Simon had met Jesus. They had met the Messiah already, they knew who He was before He entered the scene on their fishing debacle. Jesus was going to give Simon the opportunity to experience Him. Jesus doesn't want you to just know about Him, he wants you to experience Him. Simon Peter had met Christ, but he wasn't connected to Christ.

“Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah,’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter).” John 1:40-42

The word “beheld” is not an ordinary word. It means: “to look with an intense gaze, a penetrating look.”

The Lord Jesus looked at Simon Peter and saw him for what he could become. He saw him for what He was going to make out of him. You are Simon, the name means “a reed.” I’m going to make you a Peter, “a rock.” Jesus Christ is referred to in the Bible as a stone or a rock. “Peter, I’m going to make you like Me. You are weak and unstable now. I’m going to make you solid and dependable.” Jesus said, “I’m going to make something out of you,” and it captured Simon Peter.

Jesus saw something greater in Simon. Jesus saw something deeper in Simon. Jesus saw something better in Simon. Jesus can take you as you are and make you what you want to be and what He wants you to be. The Bible says, “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.*”

2 Corinthians 5:17

Even though we don’t know exactly where the boat is going, we know that Jesus is sitting in the boat with us. Trust what Jesus is doing in your life to be the best plan for your life.

2. Exchange An Empty Feeling For An Overflowing Life.

“*Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything.*” Luke 5:5

Simon Peter had been fishing all night and had nothing to show for it, just empty nets. The emptiness went much deeper than their nets, their lives felt empty. Simon Peter said, “Our nets are empty,” but I think he was also saying, “Our lives feel a whole lot like our nets look. We’re empty on the inside.”

Simon Peter was like a lot of people, He was looking for fulfillment in what he could achieve and what he could accumulate. He was looking for significance through successes. That’s a dangerous way to live your life because, if you have one failure, you lose your significance. When you think your net worth equals your self-worth, that’s dangerous because, when you have a failure, you lose your self-worth.

Your life can be filled with the finest things money can buy, but you can be completely empty on the inside. Your schedule can be filled with important meetings and parties with powerful people, but you can be completely empty on the inside.

One of the saddest things in our society today is so many people have so much to live on, but nothing to live for. They have no purpose, and they are empty on the inside. Until you learn to go where God guides and step out in faith, you’ll always feel empty. You’ll never discover the purpose for which God placed you on this planet.

Simon Peter’s nets were empty. He probably felt empty on the inside, but he didn’t realize the Great Provider was right there to provide. Everything changed when he invited Jesus onto his boat and obeyed His commands. Jesus would get into a boat, and push out into the water and use the boat as sort of a platform to speak. The crowd would sit on the hillside, and His voice would amplify on the water like an amphitheater. They could hear Him at the top of the hill very clearly. For Jesus to meet your need, you have to invite Him onto your boat, and you have to invite Him into the important parts of your life.

Peter doesn’t say, “Explain to me why I should do this because this makes no sense.” We want explanations. That’s what we usually do. We want Jesus to keep explaining to us why He’s asking us to do something in His Word that we don’t understand completely or that makes us feel uncomfortable. But Jesus doesn’t give Peter any explanation, He just expects him to obey whether he understands it or not. The truth is, we don’t live by explanations; we live by promises.

The word “worked” means “to grow weary; physically exhausted.” Luke used the word for “all night” to mean “whole or complete.” After Peter’s best efforts, he had come up empty-handed. Only God can fill your emptiness.

When Jesus stopped preaching and started telling Peter how to do his job, that didn't go over very well. Jesus starts telling him how to fish, and you can just tell that Simon Peter bristles up at this. When Jesus asked Peter to do this, look what Peter says. "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."

The word "Master" is a word that means respected teacher, brilliant teacher, gifted teacher. So it sounds like he's complimenting Jesus, but he's not. He's giving him a passive aggressive compliment. He says, "Hey, you're a master teacher, a brilliant teacher, a gifted preacher, but we're the professional fishermen. You're awesome in all the spiritual stuff, Jesus. Why don't you just stick to the spiritual stuff? Let us handle the fishing, because You don't know what you're doing. This is my business, stay out of my business."

A lot of us treat Jesus that way. "I'll give you the spiritual side of my life, whatever that is. I'm coming to church. You're good at all the spiritual stuff, but you don't understand my business, you don't understand how that works." Sometimes, we say, "I can't really trust You with this relationship because You might mess it up. I'm not sure You know how to do these things. I can't trust You with my finances." But Jesus cares, and He's the expert at everything. Give Simon Peter credit, at least he obeys anyway.

"But because you say so, I will let down the nets." Luke 5:5

Maybe Peter was obeying on the outside, but on the inside he was still rebelling, thinking, "Okay, I'm going to do this, Jesus, but it's a complete waste of time because You don't know what You're doing here, You don't know what You're talking about." But he obeys anyway, and he drops the nets into deep water in the heat of the day, and boom! the miracle happens. Jesus fills up his net, and it starts to break. He gives him not one, but two boatloads of fish. I love God's sense of humor. I mean, Jesus is saying, "Okay, I know you don't think I know what I'm talking about, so I'm going to bless you so much it's going to almost drown you. I'm going to pretty much sink your boat." When we say, "I'm doing life my way, but if what You have for me is better, I'm willing to give it a try," God will always bless our obedience to Him.

"When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink." Luke 5:6-7

The nets are tearing, and they're panicking and shocked. Jesus filled Simon Peter's nets, but he couldn't fill his life until his pride had been emptied, and this miracle emptied him of his pride.

He traded an empty life for an overflowing life. He left an empty life for a fulfilling life. When we come to God with an open heart, He will fill us up to overflowing. He went from running on empty to catching more than he could carry!

3. Trade A Sinful Heart For A Righteous Life.

Before the boats made it back to shore, Peter had a life-changing experience.

"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"
Luke 5:8

Peter fell on his knees and said, "Lord, forgive me." He knew that Jesus knew what he had been thinking, and he fell to his knees and repented. He said, "I am a sinful man! Go away from me, Lord. I don't deserve to be around You, I didn't believe you."

Now, that word "Lord" in the Greek is the word "kurios", and it means "controller of everything." Notice the progression here. At first, Peter says, "You're the Master Teacher. You're good at all the spiritual stuff, but You don't know anything about fishing." And now he's saying, "You're the controller of everything. You are the Master of everything. I've been trying to control everything, even my business, but you're the expert." And you need to realize the greatest business guru of all time is Jesus Christ. Invite Him into your business. You need to realize that the

greatest marriage counselor of all time is Jesus Christ. Invite Him into your marriage. You need to realize that the wisest financial advisor of all time is Jesus Christ. Invite Him into your finances. You need to realize that the greatest time management expert of all time is Jesus Christ. Invite Him into your schedule. It's so important for us to give Him all the areas of our lives that are important to us because He knows what's best.

He wants the best for us even more than we want the best for ourselves. Simon Peter obeyed, and obedience activates the miracle of provision. Even though he had imperfect faith, he placed it all out there by casting his net. He obeyed, even though he didn't feel like obeying, even though he didn't even think anything was going to happen. Obedience brings blessing.

The real miracle was his salvation and that was greater than the catch of fish. Jesus had captured Peter's heart. How does Jesus take us from where we are to where He wants us to be? The answer is Repentance.

The first thing you have to do to come to Christ is to recognize you are a sinner. Doing things your own way has left you empty, and it's time to give God's way a try.

4. Replace A Pointless Existence With A Purposeful life.

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’” Luke 5:10

The word for “fish” means “to take alive.” He walks away from an old life and into a whole new life.

What do you need to walk away from?

Luke 5:11 says, *“So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”* They surrendered their profession, their possessions, their little plan for their lives. They surrendered their family and gave it all to Jesus. They gave their little plans of trying to control everything over to God, and they surrendered their whole life to Christ. Why? Because when you realize how much Jesus loves you, then you know you can trust Him with everything you have. You surrender your finances to God because He wants to meet your needs even more than you want your needs met. You surrender your relationships to God because He cares more about your relationships than you do. You surrender your family to God because He cares about every little detail of your family even more than you do.

He knows what's best for you, and He cares about you. He wants the best for you more than you want the best for yourself. We see here that Christ's divine provision gives a bigger vision. And that's what God wants to do in some of your lives. He wants to give you a bigger vision for why He put you on the planet.

On the day of Pentecost, Simon Peter, as a rock, stands and preaches with unmovable power and unshakable courage, and 3,000 people come to Christ. God saw more in him than Peter saw in himself. Peter was made for a higher purpose. He was living for the wrong purpose. There was more to life than he was living. You need someone who can take your life and make something out of you. Jesus is in the business of taking people as they are and making them as they ought to be.

5. Break From Casual Acquaintance to Become A Committed Follower.

The story is right back where it all started—almost identical details as his calling. Three and a half years later, we find some of the same men on the same sea doing the same thing and having the same results as before. After 3 1/2 years, Peter goes back where he had started from. Life without Jesus is always empty and frustrating.

There is an interesting play on words in the conversation with Peter after the resurrection of Jesus that clarifies his love and his allegiance to Jesus.

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’” (“Do you love Me more than these boats and nets?”) John 21:15

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love you.” (You know I feel strongly about you.) John 21:15

“Again Jesus said, ‘Simon, do you love me?’ (Do you love me more than these people?) John 21:16

“He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” (You know I care for you like family.) John 21:16

“The third time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ (Do you love me more than your own will?)
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ John 21:17

“He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’” (I love you with all of my heart.)
Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.’” John 21:17