**Man Fishing (Luke 5:1-11)**

**I. Consider the Disciple's Condition**:

 On this day these fishermen went out to sea filled with self-confidence after all they were very experts, experiencedfishermen. They had done this work all their lives. They knew the best time and the best places to catch fish. They also went out energetically. They worked hard and worked long hours. They did not give up easily. They persevered all night. They were also well equipped with their boats and nets. They also went out as a team, each of them doing their part. Experience, energy, equipment, teamwork: it sounds like a recipe for success. And yet in verse 5 Simon says “we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing." “There are fish in the sea but not one fish came into our nets.” How embarrassing! How strange! What is going on?

It is a common experience that when we have worked hard and long with no visible results we get discouraged and frustrated and disillusioned. This applies equally to individual efforts as well as to a congregation. To work hard and to work long and get no results feels like time completely wasted. At times like this you want to give up and throw in the towel?

But it turns out that their lack of success is an opportune time for Jesus to teach these disciples some key lessons about the kingdom of God. Ourhour of weariness and weakness is an opportunity for God to teach us about God's strength, the hour of darkness is a time when God shines his light, the hour of failure is a time for God to show forth his success. Some of the most important lessons that God has to teach us occur when we least expect them, when we are weary, when there seems to be nothing good about our circumstances. God does not see the same hopeless situation that we often see.

**II. Consider the Lord's Command to a weary people**:

 v4) **"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."** Think about it, the Lord knows that they are tired and he knows that they have caught nothing but still he asks these disciples to do this work? How do you think that this command is going to sound to a group of weary disciples? It seems like an insensitive command. We would all understand if there was not much enthusiasm. Secondly, why ask them to work rather than others who are full of energy and just watching on the sidelines? Instead he turns to those who have come to the end of themselves - and feel they have nothing more to give – and he says "now is the time I want you to do this work." Thirdly, how do you think this command is going to sound to a group of experienced fishermen who have plenty of experience about fishing under their belt? Master you are a carpenter: night time is the best time for net fishing: this is not a good time to do this?

Peter clearly does not understand why the Lord would ask them to do this! It seems unwise. It seems like a waste of time and energy. Could it be that there will be times when the word of God is not going to sound insightful, it is not going to sound like the answer to your problems.How many times have we rejected his counsel because it seemed nonsensical to us? There is a great challenge here! Shall I fall back on my experience or shall I obey the Lord? Shall I rely on my reasoning abilities or shall I obey the Lord? Shall I consider my physical weariness or shall I obey the Lord? What will Peter decide?

**III. Peter's Compliance**

 Verse 5) Peter’s response: "**I will let down the nets because you say so."** Does Peter sound to youlike he has great faith? Is he saying “Lord I am 100% positive that something great is about to happen!” Let’s face it he has no confidence that anything is going to happen.Your counsel sounds off to me, but because you are asking me to do this I will obey.

What is going on here? Peter seems to be saying “I respect Jesus, and because of this I will obey.”He had come to a point in his relationship with Jesus where he knew, it is always better to do as Jesus says. It isalways better to honor Jesus. I will do it Lord. I will do it not because it is easy, or because it makes sense, or because it feels good – but because it comes from you.” It is not a bad place to be in your Christian life.

**III. Consider the Catch**

Verse 6) **"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**." The catch was far beyond all that they could ask or think. It was contrary not only to their experience but also contrary to their expectations.

Have we not heard this testimony so often from others? “Oh I really did not want to go to church, but I did it because the Lord said so, and I was really blessed. The Lord spoke to me. Oh I did not want to share the gospel with this person but I did so because the Lord said so and the person believed on the Lord. I did not want to forgive someone but I did so because the Lord said so and as a result I feel free. I did not want to tell the truth but I did because the Lord said so and he delivered me.” And what is so very humbling is that God is willing to bless our feeble obedience. Important lesson “always obey the Lord even when you do not feel like it, always obey the Lord even when it does not seem wise to you.”

**IV. Peter’s Response**

 V8) **Peter fell down at Jesus feet saying “depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord**.” Why did Peter feel so unworthy? “I had unworthy thoughts of Him.” Outwardly I did what he said, but inwardly my thoughts of Jesus were not honoring. And as a result of this incident he has a greater vision of who Jesus is and a more realistic view of himself. It is what Calvin called a double knowledge. When you come to know God you know yourself. When you truly know yourself you shall know God. If you do not know God you do not know yourself. Peter now knows Jesus better. He now has a greater sense of theuniqueness of Jesus. He has a sense of the holiness of Jesus. The power and wisdom of God abides in this man. Jesus is truly great.

Peter was afraid for he had failed and dishonored Jesus. He felt unworthy to be a disciple of Jesus. He knew that he was disqualified from being a disciple of Jesus. “Jesus I am a sinful man go away from me.” I am useless to you. Go away! Now there are some who might say these words because they love their sin and want Jesus to go away, but this is not what Peter means! Rather “Jesus you deserve so much better than me.” It is not God condemning him or judging him, Peter is doing it himself.

Is it not instructive to watch Peter start by saying “I know better” to now saying “I am useless.” Is this not so with us: we can be so confident about ourselves and about our wisdom and then one negative experience - and we are ready to quit. Man I am useless.

But this is not where the story ends. **Verse 10b “then Jesus said to Simon do not be afraid: from now on you will catch men.”** I know who you are Simon. I know what you were thinking. I know your deeds. I know you are a sinner, Simon. But listen I have a mission for you and it is not about catching fish it is about catching men, people, human beings.

“**So they pulled their boats up in shore, left everything and followed** him.” Start with the first encounter. I respect Jesus. I have some faith in him. It is better to obey than not to obey. The second encounter. I fear Jesus. He is holy I am a sinner. I do not deserve to be near him. I am unworthy of even untying his sandals. How would you describe his response? Surely he is overwhelmed by his grace and mercy. Jesus knows me and says “I still want you to be my disciple.” I will use you to further the kingdom.

Truly, how does one respond when Jesus, the Lord, the Son of God, calls us to follow him? Simon left everything and followed him. I would think at that moment Peter realized that being called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ was an honor and privilege of the greatest magnitude.

Think of this: they just caught a huge quantity of fish. There is enough to make them wealthy. Business is better than it has ever been before because of Christ’s miracle. And then the last verse says “they left it and followed Jesus.” He is not merely focused on business success it is kingdom success that moves him. Following Jesus is my primary passion and purpose in life.

And Jesus was not kidding when he said “you shall catch men.” At Pentecost Peter preached a sermon and said to the people “repent and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. That day about three thousand were added to their number.” Acts 2.

You see the time of personal failure was necessary to prepare him and them for this period of divine blessing. The last thing Peter would do is take the glory for what happened. He would say “this is the work of God –I only obeyed his word and nothing more.” He is the one who did this –he is the one who wins souls, he is the one who makes the work of the ministry successful. He is a man who has been prepared to give all the glory to God…. What a profound privilege it was for the Lord to choose and use Peter.

The Lord is preparing a people who knowthat “unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain.” He is preparing a people who know that “apart from Christ they can do nothing.” He is preparing a people who know they must abide in the vine. He is preparing people who are looking to God in prayer for the blessing, and pleading with the Lord. He is preparing a people who know that they must look to Jesus for spiritual fruit and blessing. And God allowed this to happen so that they might not trust in themselves but in God.

Secondly, the Lord taught them that the Lord's miracles and kingdom success include people's efforts. When he changes water to wine someone else fills up the jars. When he is about to raise Lazarus from the dead, he calls upon others to remove the stone. When he feeds the four and five thousand, he uses someone else's' bread and gets the disciples to organize the crowd. It is not uncommon for the Lord to use people even when he is about to do a great miracle. He does not leave them all sitting by idly but invites them to participate in his work. Yes it takes a work of God, but God wants to work with and through his people!

Peter, the time is now. It may seem like it is the wrong time but it is not, now is the time for God’s kingdom to break into the world. Nothing is too difficult for me. Peter I came so that many will know me. But this is what it will take: ordinary people who recognize the extraordinary Jesus they serve. It will take obedience to God’s word even when it seems tough and inconvenient. It will take a humble spirit. It will take a full commitment on our part. Follow Jesus.