

The Gospel According to Luke

"The Catch of Your Life" Chapter 5:1-11

Introduction

Simon and other experienced, career fishermen had been out all night on their boats, using a type of net called a dragnet. This net was about three hundred feet long and eight feet wide. One side had corks to keep it afloat; the other side had lead sinkers. Sometimes the net would be stretched between two boats; then the fishermen would row in a circle to bring the ends of the net together. Other fishermen on the boat would work at drawing in the cord at the bottom and top of the net in order to trap the fish inside.

They had caught nothing. I'm guessing this would be extremely rare for career commercial fishermen – almost unheard of. Then, at the request of Jesus, they set out again and caught the greatest haul of fish in their careers.

Their failure and then success had nothing to do with their *equipment* or their *experience*. It was obvious that God had *prevented*, then *provided*, the fish.

It put their careers into a whole new perspective. *God went fishing with them!* Their life's work was something of great interest to God; something He was intimately involved with. God wasn't just for the synagogue, or Sabbath school, or for the more 'spiritual' parts of your life. He was with you as you went about your daily business – preventing or providing as He saw fit.

Simon's career became a calling. He would no longer fish for fish, but for men.

You have a career. Whatever your business is; whatever you're busy doing as your life's work... It's your career. You may want to leave it behind and serve God in a more traditional full-time ministry. That

can certainly happen; but, most often, **God wants you to see your career as your calling**. You will begin to see your career as your calling when you understand that God is interested in you, and intimately involved with you, on a daily basis. God goes to work with you; or, if your 'career' is that of homemaker, God stays home with you.

We want to take a look at *career* and *calling* in our text. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Give Control Of Your Career To Jesus, and #2 Get Confirmation Of Your Calling From Jesus.

#1 Give Control Of Your Career To Jesus (v1-7)

Simon and the others were commercial fishermen. Jesus caught them, and called them; then He used their career as a metaphor, telling them they would be fishers of men.

Jesus wasn't specifically looking for fishermen in order to have a great illustration. He caught and called others from different walks of life – like Matthew, the tax collector. Whatever their career; and whatever your 'career'; Jesus catches, then calls you to serve Him.

Every believer should understand that he or she is involved in full-time Christian service right where they are. Think of your 'career,' and then give control of it to Jesus.

[Luke 5:1](#) So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

We previously saw Jesus teaching and preaching in synagogues each Sabbath. Now you see Him teaching and preaching out in the open – daily, where the people lived and worked and shopped. It's an indication that He wants us to do the same – to be giving our testimony as witnesses daily, where people live and work and shop.

The "[Lake of Gennesaret](#)" is another name for the Sea of Galilee. In the Old Testament it was called "Chinneroth"; it was also referred to

as the “Sea of Tiberius.” A “multitude” had gathered and were pressing in upon Him, anxious to hear His words.

Luke 5:2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets.

Jesus, like everyone else, saw “two boats”; but to Him, *one of them was a pulpit!* We should always be open to seeing opportunities to turn something into a pulpit from which the Gospel can be presented.

Simon and the other fishermen were “washing their nets.” They were removing debris and using fresh water to clean their large dragnets – taking good care of their equipment. (I can remember my dad and brothers always cleaning their mechanic’s tools at the end of each day). It speaks of experience and skill.

Luke 5:3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

“Simon” is called “Simon Peter” later in this story; and hereafter will be referred to mostly as “Peter.”

Jesus and Simon already knew one another; this was not their first encounter. Simon’s brother, Andrew, had brought Simon to Jesus. They were already followers, but had not yet been called away from their fishing business.

Peter was tired and probably thinking about breakfast and sleep; but he willingly accommodated Jesus. In the boat, Jesus would be less distracted by the pressing crowds; from the boat, His words would receive a natural amplification as they traveled over the water.

Luke 5:4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

Jesus’ suggestion would involve all of the fishermen, in both boats. Dragnet fishing was done at night, in the shallows; in the daytime, in the deep, was a preposterous proposition. It was just the kind of thing a carpenter would do, but not a fisherman!

Luke 5:5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

Simon respected Jesus as a teacher and preacher; he was already a follower, already a disciple. He did not yet understand that a relationship with Jesus permeates your entire life. Jesus is not just interested in your so-called spiritual activities. **Everything** you do and say *is* spiritual as far as He is concerned.

Simon let Jesus know that he knew more about fishing than the Lord. He was an experienced commercial fisherman with properly maintained equipment. *His workplace was no place for God's interference!*

Simon obeyed the Lord. Whether it was to please the Lord, or to humor Him, we can't tell. To his credit, Simon obeyed even though he was tired, hungry, and frustrated from a night of toil in which he caught nothing. Often the Lord will ask you to do something when you are least prepared for it. *He enjoys it!* Get used to it. He knows He is going to strengthen you.

Luke 5:6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

Luke 5:7 So they 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.

You couldn't catch more fish than this without sinking your boats! This was, therefore, the greatest catch of fish in their careers as commercial fishermen.

Let's pause for a moment. I see two things: A *contrast*, and a *contemplation*.

The contrast could not be more stunning. No fish; then the most fish ever. God prevented, then provided, their catch. On the most basic level it was obvious that God was involved in their fishing business. No matter their experience and equipment – it was the Lord Who made the difference between failure and success.

God is not just a part of your life, even a big part; He is your life. The apostle Paul would say (in Acts 17:28), “in Him we live and move, and have our being.”

Then there is a contemplation in or story. For Simon and the other commercial fishermen, this was a career-defining moment. They could never catch a greater catch than this; they could never tell a bigger fish story. In your career, you might have such a goal; you might even be able or enabled to achieve it. You might get to that career-defining moment.

Then what? I'll tell you what: You will feel like Solomon felt when he wrote Ecclesiastes. In almost every sphere of life – art, science, music, you name it – he achieved beyond what anyone could ever hope to achieve. It left him empty and unsatisfied; he called it all “vanity.” Once you achieve your moment, all that is left is telling the story over-and-over again until even you don't want to hear it.

Career achievements are empty and unsatisfying unless God has been involved with you and you can give Him the glory.

All of this encourages you to give control of your career to Jesus:

1. If you feel you are being prevented from achieving... Then it is the Lord teaching you to learn *contentment being abased*.
2. If you are being provided with achievement... Then it is the Lord teaching you to *learn how to abound*.

At either extreme, or anywhere in the middle, you can be satisfied because Jesus is with you in your boat. His fellowship overshadows your career and its relative failures and successes.

Give Jesus control. How? Look at verse five, where Simon said, “nevertheless at Your word I will...” **Obey His Word in every area even though you might think He was only a carpenter and doesn't know your business.**

For example: A lot of Christian businessmen adopt the practices of the world. God's Word tells them to be honest and fair; but they feel their business would suffer. They need to obey the Lord.

In your home: Scripture tells you that corporal punishment is an important and necessary component of disciplining your child. You must spank your child. But fewer and fewer believers believe this anymore. They think they know more than Jesus.

Anytime you hesitate to obey God's clear directives, for any reason, you are treating Jesus as a carpenter who knows less than you or the experts. He's the Lord.

Give Jesus control. Once you hear the Word, then do it – despite your own or anyone else's objections.

Back to our story... Simon was shaken by the events that transpired.

#2 Get Confirmation Of Your Calling From Jesus (v8-11)

Lot's of crazy things happen when Jesus is a passenger in your boat:

1. Storms start out of nowhere, then stop at His command.
2. He walks on water and invites you to do the same.
3. Tons of fish find their way miraculously into your net at the wrong time of day and in the wrong part of the lake.

Luke 5:8 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

He was called "**Simon**"; now, and only here in Luke's Gospel, "**Simon Peter**"; from here on in Luke he will be called "**Peter**" (except when Luke is quoting others). On the simplest level, it is to indicate a significant change had occurred.

Simon was beginning to understand Jesus was more than a carpenter turned Bible-teacher. He was the "**Lord.**" When you understand Jesus is Lord, **you understand you are not!** You're a sinner with no merit by which to be in the presence of Jesus.

Simultaneously, you realize God's grace. The word translated "**fell down**" can mean *fall towards*. Peter fell towards the "**knees**" of Jesus

– as if to grab hold of Him. He was holding on to Jesus while asking Him to depart!

Luke 5:9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

Luke 5:10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”

You must have a fear of God, but never be afraid of Him. Too many believers lack a fear of God. They are told what to do in God’s Word, and promised by God that they can do all things He asks; yet they ignore His Word in favor of their own feelings. Remember, your response should always be, “nevertheless at Your word I will.”

Unbelievers tend to be afraid of God. They are afraid of what God might do if they surrender their lives to Him. They’d rather toil, catching nothing, than be called away to follow the Lord. They don’t understand the joy of having Jesus in their boat.

These guys go from being fishermen to being “fishers of men.” Keep in mind the type of fishermen they were: Net fishermen. We think in terms of lures and bait, of flash and deception. We’re not to think of ourselves as line fishermen, but as net fishermen. We throw out the net by presenting the Gospel, then draw it in. What we ‘catch’ in it is up to the Lord.

A few years ago Barry McGuire had a song in which he tried to update the Bible’s metaphors. The idea was that, when Jesus came, the culture was agricultural and easily understood metaphors like the Shepherd and the sheep. His updated version portrayed Jesus as a *Cosmic Cowboy*.

I don’t know what I think about that... But I do think that Jesus can make metaphors out of your career. For example, and I’ve told you over the years, I had a desire to help people. I wasn’t a Christian but thought I could help others by studying psychology and becoming some kind of counselor. My own life was in shambles. All of that fell apart; but years later, after I came to know the Lord, I found and find myself in a position to truly help people by sharing Jesus with them.

Luke 5:11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Peter and these others had already become followers of Jesus. Now it was confirmed to them that they were called away from their careers as fishermen to become fishers of men.

This could happen to you. Jesus could call you into what we like to call full-time Christian work. Being a minister or a missionary could become your vocation.

More often, and most likely, the Lord will give you confirmation of your calling and you will stay right where you are. Your home; your place of employment; your school; these become your fishing grounds.

Conclusion

Let's return one final time to Peter's words, "[nevertheless at Your word I will.](#)"

4If you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ, God's Word is full with invitations for you to surrender your life over to Him...

4You who are believers: Let the Lord identify any areas in which you are trusting in your own experience or equipment. And then be honest about any areas in which you are refusing to obey God's Word because you think you'll have more success doing it another way.