

**Authority Over Disciples****Luke 5:1-11**

I was scouting the internet searching for fish stories. With the ability to photo shop pictures with tools on the computer you can't tell if they are real or not. Nonetheless, there were some amazing photos of record sized fish of all kinds from large mouthed bass to tuna to shark. Last year David and I went fishing while on vacation and he caught a little blue gill about 3" long. A fish stick has more meat on it.

Many years ago while ice fishing up at Camp my Dad caught a 39.75" pike. We had it mounted for him and it now adorns my brother's office.

Someone has said that more fish have been caught than were ever in the stream, meaning that we are prone to tell lots of fish stories. It's like the guy who went fishing all day and caught nothing. On his way home he stopped at the local market and bought three fish. He asked to have the fish tossed to him so he could at least say that he caught them without telling a lie.

Our passage today takes place on a lake and is about another fishing story. Turn with me to **Luke 5:1-11**.

The story is more than about fishing though. It's about discipleship. Let's look at three thoughts.

Discipleship has a call

Discipleship has a cause

Discipleship has a cost

**I. DISCIPLESHIP HAS A CALL – v. 1-10a**

It has been said that Mark Twain liked to go fishing, but not because he liked catching fish. He did it to relax. Catching fish was work. If he was down by the river trying to relax while not fishing people who saw him would bother him. So he devised a plan to relax while pretending to fish so that he would not be bothered. He put a bobber on his line, but no hook. When people saw him with fishing

pole in hand they would leave him alone and so he was able to relax.

In our passage Jesus is down by the water's edge of Lake Genessaret. It was called that because the plain of Genessaret extended down to the lake. You might be looking in the back of your Bible at the map section wondering where in the world this lake might be. It is known by other names in the Bible. In Numbers 34 it is known as the Lake of Chinneroth, which in the Hebrew means harp shaped. It was also known as the Sea of Tiberias by the local people, but we know it more commonly as the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan River entered the Sea from the north and then exited at the southern end traveling on down to the Dead Sea. It was brimming with fish.

On this particular day Jesus made His way down to the edge of the shore and we note that people had gathered around Him. It was apparently a large enough group that warranted some action on the part of Jesus to make alternative plans in order to address them. The text indicates that they were crowding around Him. The KJV says they **“pressed upon Him.”**

The same word is used in **John 11:38**. In this example Jesus had arrived at the tomb of Lazarus and John records that the stone was laid across the entrance of the tomb.

It's also used in **John 21:9** where Jesus has laid fish on the coals of a fire.

Then we also see it in **Luke 23:23** where we find the urgent demands of the crucifixion pressing in on Christ.

The crowds were pressing in on Jesus meaning they were right on top of Him. Think for a moment about some famous person who attracts a large crowd all pressing around wanting an autograph or a picture. Jesus could not effectively teach with the crowds pressing around Him. We can imagine that their actions were forcing Him to keep stepping

backwards until He was almost forced into the water.

Jesus looking around and noticed two boats at the water's edge that belonged to some fishermen who were busy cleaning their nets. It wasn't a difficult process, but one that took time and effort. I wondered why nets that had been in the water needed to be washed, but I found out that nets needed to be washed and then stretched out to dry. Otherwise they would rot. I suppose whether you caught fish or not, it's most likely that there was seaweed or other debris that might be clinging to the net. Let's keep in mind also that these nets weren't just the small kinds you see fishermen tossing out by hand. These were large nets, large enough that what they held almost sank two boats. So the cleaning process took time and effort.

Jesus decided that the boat would make a good platform from which to preach. This wasn't just a small row boat it was a fishing boat, one large enough to hold a crew. It was from this vantage point that He will teach the crowds that had gathered to hear Him.

**Bible scholar Plummer adds "Christ uses Peter's boat as a pulpit whence to throw the net of the gospel over His hearers."**

It's important to remember that this is not the first encounter between Jesus and Peter. We learned last week that Jesus accompanied Peter home after the Sabbath service. It was at that service that Peter was a firsthand witness to the miracle of the demon cast from the man in the synagogue. Then at his home he had a front row seat to the healing of his mother-in-law. We can also assume that if Jesus had been in town any length of town at all, we know that Peter would have heard Him teach in the synagogue because that was his habit. Matthew and Mark give another account of an earlier time Peter was fishing when Jesus gave a general call to him. This is a second call to Peter and Jesus gave Him a little test.

Climbing into the boat Jesus asked him to **"put out a little from shore."**

Now here's Peter. In a couple of verses we find that he had been fishing all night, he's tired, the nets are cleaned and stored for the next night's fishing trip. I wonder what he was thinking about in the back of his mind when Jesus asked him to push out. It had been a dismal night of fishing. Maybe he was a little discouraged. This was his livelihood and he had nothing to sell in the market. What was he going to tell his wife? They couldn't afford the new dishwasher or new wheels for the wagon. Besides having no fish, he was tired and probably looking forward to getting home and going to bed. Now this guy wants me to get back in the boat and launch out a little ways in order for him to teach. **How long will his sermon last?**

Nevertheless, he did what he was asked. **When he got the boat in position a little from shore, did he drop anchor and curl up on a bench in the back of the boat and nap or did he listen to Jesus teach?**

Though it might have been a bit inconvenient for Peter, he was a captive audience to what Jesus had to say.

Here's my point: when we begin our journey with Jesus He will ask us to do something that is simple, something that we might have control over, like push the boat out a little. It's a test of obedience. **If we are not faithful in the little things, how can we be faithful in the big things?** It was a simple test for Peter. **Are we willing to put aside what we want to do, to put aside our agenda and activities, even if inconvenient, in order to do the simple thing Jesus asks of us?**

It might be to help a neighbor when we would rather go in and rest in front of the TV or the newspaper for the evening.

It might be to prepare a meal for someone, just because. **I read a story about a woman who volunteered at a local nursing home that was a**

block from her home. One day she noticed a man with a very sad face at dinner not eating. She went over and asked what the matter was. He said in a matter of fact way that he was Jewish and wondered how they expected him to eat that food. She asked what he would like and he told her some soup. She went home, made soup and brought it back to him. She did that quite often and eventually the man gave his heart to Christ.

It might be to carry books for a classmate who is on crutches.

The call of Jesus begins with an act of something simple that is a test of obedience. **Is He asking you to do something simple?** He might be asking you to put out a little from the shore. **Will you listen and will you obey?**

Time passed and the lesson was over. People were perhaps leaving in small groups. Others might have been lingering on a grassy knoll next to the beach discussing the implications of what Jesus had just said. Perhaps Peter thought that at last he could head back to shore and finish his work before heading home. But Jesus had other plans and another test for Peter. Jesus will do that you know, always give another test, a greater test after we have completed the first one.

**Verse 4 “When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’”**

Instead of heading back into shore, Jesus wanted them to go out deeper into the sea. He wasn't asking Peter to take Him on a little pleasure cruise for a three hour tour. He wanted Peter to go back to work. It was yet another test of obedience.

Peter responds by calling Jesus **“Master.”** It was a title of respect and authority, not a term affirming Jesus' deity. Peter was quick to reply that they had been out all night and had caught nothing. Not only had they caught nothing, what Peter adds is

important. They had toiled all night, their work was labor intensive. Also implied is that everything had been cleaned and stored away. The seasoned fisherman put on his sailor's cap and questioned the wisdom of someone who was a carpenter. Peter knew those waters. He had fished them all his life. What Jesus was asking didn't make any logical sense from his point of view. If you wanted to catch fish, you fished at night when they were near the surface. During the day the fish went deeper.

They were tired, they had caught nothing and someone who knew nothing about fishing was telling them to do something that went against everything he knew about fishing.

It would be like me trying to tell Rich how to build a cabinet or telling Carl how to make an automobile ac unit or telling Matthew how to solve a mathematical problem or telling Rhonda how to change a dressing on a patient.

Here's another point about the call to discipleship I see from this section. Sometimes what Jesus asks us to do doesn't make logical sense, but He wants us to do it anyway.

**“Push out into deeper water and let down the nets for a catch.”** Notice what else Jesus said. Not only let down the nets, but there was the expectation of catching something. The NIV uses the word **“catch”**, but in the case I prefer how the Amplified Bible reads. It describes it as a **“haul.”** The word catch to me implies that they'll get something for the trouble. The word haul means that it was going to be sizeable, a large quantity. Jesus was telling him to put down his nets and expect to pull in a large load of fish. Jesus was saying that the catch was going to be significant.

Peter questioned the wisdom of the request, but even so we see his obedience albeit reluctantly.

**“But because You say so, I will let down the nets.”** Master, if it was anyone else but You, I'd be

rowing back in, but because You want me to, I'll do it. I wonder if he had in the back of his mind the other miracles he had witnessed. I wonder if Peter was beginning to better understand who this was and to accept as true what Jesus said and just maybe something big would happen.

It was the next step in Peter's discipleship process. He was showing another level of faith. But this incident through the eyes of Peter also shows us the tremendous pull between faith and doubt.

**If you have put out a little from the shore and Jesus asks you to push out to deeper water and let down your net, will you, even if it doesn't make sense? Are we prone to be like Peter and have our excuses about why such a thing shouldn't be done or can't be done? Is there some reluctance on our part? But are we willing to say that because it is the Lord who asks, we'll do it?**

Jesus is asking us to step out in faith and obey. **Are we willing to go deeper in our spiritual walk that we might have a greater catch when we let down our nets?**

It doesn't make sense, Lord, but because you say so I will. **Have you made that your response?**

Peter let down the nets.

There were three types of fish generally caught in those waters for food. There was a small fish very similar in size to a sardine. There was a larger fish similar to a carp. Then there was a fish called *musht* that is best eaten when it is between 6"-18". This is the fish that many believe Peter caught that day. You can still go to restaurants around the Sea of Galilee today and find on the menu an item called St. Peter's Fish.

Our text tells us that when they had thrown out their nets, they caught such a large number of fish that their net began to tear. It was just as Jesus had said. But if that isn't significant enough, when they asked the other boat to come and help them with the catch,

both boats were filled and began to sink. It was a record catch, so large in fact that verse 9 tells us that these seasoned fishermen were astonished. They had never seen anything like it before in their whole life. The experienced fisherman was sure he would catch nothing. Jesus said, let down your nets and you'll get the catch of your life.

Peter's response was not one of awe or even the thought of selling the fish to buy bigger boats and set up a great enterprise. Pardon the pun but his net worth had just exponentially increased and yet that was not what he had on his mind. Note **verse 8. "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"** That is the response of anyone who has a real encounter with Jesus.

Peter began to realize just who was in his presence. He realized his own sinfulness as one writer notes **"The nearer one comes to God, the more he feels his own sinfulness and unworthiness."** And notice that Jesus never once said anything about Peter's sin. Peter didn't need Him to he knew it in his heart. That's what happens when we come into the presence of the Lord. It was Abraham's response in **Genesis 18:27**. It was the response of **Isaiah in 6:5**. And here Peter is telling Jesus to leave him. He wasn't worthy to be in the Lord's presence. Peter, the proud fisherman with all his self-confidence was in a moment's time stripped of his pride and in a sincere act of reverence did the only thing he could do – bowed in the presence of the Lord and admit his own sin. It was an instantaneous an appropriate response, a true confession, a heartfelt reaction. **Is that our response when we see the Lord work in us and around us? Do we admit our own guilt?**

The Lord was now beginning the process of stripping away the self-will of Peter, a process that would take every day of His ministry on earth and would culminate on Pentecost. This moment for Peter was the beginning of a life of faith, a journey of trust, a path of obedience.

But I wonder this morning, how many of us are like Peter, too willing to trust our own skills and abilities rather than step out in obedience to act on what the Lord tells us to do?

When we begin to see Jesus as Peter did, do we respond in confession and admission of our own unworthiness?

But aren't you glad the story doesn't end there? Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't say to Peter, "All right, if that's the way you feel, take Me back into shore and you'll never see Me again?"

Aren't you glad He is patient with us and that He builds our faith one day, one step, one incident at a time?

Isn't it interesting that Peter did not have the same response when Jesus performed the other miracles he had witnessed. It wasn't until Jesus touched something that Peter owned, something that was his that he came to the conclusion of his unworthiness. That is the moment when God is able to take a person and begin to mold them and use them, when they are most pliable and willing to respond to His call. It is at that moment that Jesus takes the next step on this disciple ship.

Discipleship has a call.  
Discipleship has a cause.

## II. DISCIPLESHIP HAS A CAUSE – v. 10b

**“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’”**

Jesus used what Peter was familiar with and likened it to his new calling, his new occupation. The cause that Peter was being called was to bring people to the Savior. The sizeable catch of fish would be a foreshadowing of the catch of men that would occur on the day of Pentecost when he preached his first sermon under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and 3,000 were saved. My curious mind would like to know if the number of fish in the net was the

same as those saved at Pentecost. I suppose we'll never know. It is the cause we are called to.

Paul Harvey once said “Too many Christians are no longer fishers of men but keepers of the aquarium.”

One day the great missionary, Hudson Taylor, was traveling on a Chinese junk from Shanghai to Ningpo. He had been witnessing to a man named Peter who rejected the gospel but was under deep conviction. In the course of events, Peter fell overboard, but no one made any effort to save him. Taylor sprang to the mast, let down the sail, and jumped overboard in hopes of finding his friend. But no one on board joined Taylor in his frantic search. Taylor saw a fishing boat nearby and yelled to them to help, but they wouldn't do it without money. Finally, after bartering for every penny that Taylor had, the fishermen stopped their fishing and began to look for Peter. In less than a minute of dragging their net, they found him, but it was too late. They were too busy fishing to care about saving a drowning man.

We can easily condemn the selfish indifference of those fishermen, but by indicting them, we may condemn ourselves. Are we too busy with our jobs and other activities to take the time to rescue those who are perishing without Christ?

Each of us, like Peter, has been called to the cause of becoming fishers of men, to cast out the life net that they might be drawn to the Savior. Christ does not call everyone to full time ministry, but He does call all of us to active duty as fishers of men. That is both a command and a promise. We are to go, but in our going there will be the catching. It's a term that means to catch alive. And if we think that the command is impossible, remember that the results are up to Him. It is an exercise in faith and obedience. As we sang earlier ours is to Trust and Obey.

Each of us has been called to participate in the cause Christ has called us to. We call it the Great

Commission found in **Matthew 28:19-20**.  
**“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”**

**Is there a better or nobler cause than that?**

Discipleship has a call.  
 Discipleship has a cause.  
 Discipleship has a cost.

### **III. DISCIPLESHIP HAS A COST – v. 11**

What was said to Peter was meant for the others as well. James and John joined Peter in this decision to leave their fishing business and follow Jesus. This was no small decision. They left a sizeable, profitable catch. Listen to the words of Alfred Edersheim from his masterpiece *“The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah”* as he describes what this meant for these men.

“The expression “Follow Me” would be readily understood [to the Jewish people of that day] as a call to become the permanent disciple of a teacher. Similarly, it was not only the practice of the Rabbis, but regarded as one of the most sacred duties, for a Master to gather around him a circle of disciples. Thus, neither Peter and Andrew, nor the sons of Zebedee, could have misunderstood the call of Christ, or even regarded it as strange.

So far as the Master was concerned, we mark three points. First, the call came after the open breach with, and initial persecution of, the Jewish authorities. It was, therefore, a call to fellowship in His peculiar relationship to the Synagogue. Secondly, it necessitated the abandonment of all their former occupations, and, indeed, of all earthly ties. Thirdly, it was from the first, and clearly, marked as totally different from a call to such

discipleship, as that of any other Master of Israel. It was not to learn more of doctrine, nor more fully to follow out a life-direction already taken, but to begin, and to become, something quite new, of which their former occupation offered an emblem. ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ It was then quite a new call this, which at the same time indicated its real aim and its untold difficulties. Such a call could not have been addressed to them, if they had not already been disciples of Jesus, understood His Mission, and the character of the Kingdom of God. But, the more we think of it, the more do we perceive the magnitude of the call and of the decision which it implied – for, without doubt, they understood what it implied, as clearly, in some respects perhaps more clearly, than we do. All the deeper, then, must have been their loving belief in Him, and their earnest simplicity and entireness of self-surrender, that it needed not even a spoken *Yea* on their part, they forsook ship and home to follow Him. And so, successively...those who had had been the first to hear, were also the first to follow Jesus. And ever afterwards did they remain closest to Him, who had been the first fruits of His Ministry.”

**What does following Jesus look like to you?** At the least it is surrender of self, to give up one’s own will to follow the will and the way of another. It implies self-commitment in a way that breaks all other ties. They were being called to do what the Master did – fish for men. And notice that their response was immediate. They didn’t deliberate or debate. They didn’t waffle or waver. They went.

We will see others who said they would follow Jesus, but first had to tend to other responsibilities. Following Jesus is a real commitment. The church has a lot of fans of Jesus, they like what He has to say so far as it doesn’t infringe on their activities or agenda. The Lord isn’t asking for fans, He’s asking for followers, people who will commit to serve Him, no matter what the cost. This cost means we must die to self in order to live for Christ.

Discipleship of such cost is willing to live by faith and walk in obedience. It is a life that does not look back or go back.

On the Australian coat of arms is a picture of an emu and a kangaroo. These animals were chosen because they share a characteristic that appealed to their forefathers. Both the emu and kangaroo can move only forward, not back. The emu's three-toed foot causes it to fall if it tries to go backwards, and the kangaroo is prevented from moving in reverse by its large tail. Those who truly choose to follow Jesus become like the emu and kangaroo, moving only forward, never back (Luke 9:62).

#### I Will Follow

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Wheresoe'er my lot may be,  
Where Thou goest I will follow,  
Yes, My Lord, I'll follow Thee.

Though the road be rough and thorny,  
Trackless as the foaming sea,  
Thou hast trod this way before me,  
And I'll gladly follow Thee.  
Though I meet with tribulation,  
Sorely tempted though I be,  
I remember Thou wast tempted,  
And rejoice to follow Thee.

Our hymnal has such wonderful songs of commitment, songs that inspire us to follow. **Are they merely catchy tunes and words or do they truly touch our heart and bid us, indeed bind us to follow Jesus?**

#### I Give All to You (595)

I give all my service to You,  
I give all my service to You;  
No matter the cost or what others do,  
I give all my service to You.

I give all my future to You,

I give all my future to You,  
No matter the cost or what others do,  
I give all my future to You.

CCLI 1292471

#### I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (602)

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow,  
Tho' none go with me, still I will follow,  
Tho' none go with me, still I will follow,  
No turning back, no turning back.

CCLI 1292471

#### Where He Leads Me (593)

Where He leads me I will follow;  
Where He leads me I will follow;  
Where He leads me I will follow,  
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.

CCLI 1292471

#### I Surrender All (596)

All to Jesus I surrender,  
All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him,  
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all,  
I surrender all.  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all.

CCLI 1292471

Peter shows us that discipleship has a call,  
Discipleship has a cause,  
Discipleship has a cost.

In the weeks ahead Luke will describe more of what is involved in the cost of discipleship. In the past two weeks we saw that Jesus has authority and power over demons and diseases. Today we learn that He has power and authority to call disciples. **Is He calling you to follow? Will you trust Him? Will you obey Him?**