



“Catching Fish”
Luke 5:1-11

Idea: Confident trust in the Lord Jesus is the key to leading sinners to faith in Christ.

Intro: In the world of competitive fishing, every angler is looking for an edge. They are striving to discover a lure, a presentation, or a location that will help them catch more and bigger fish. They are working to find something that will give them an advantage over their competition. Anglers work hard at this because their livelihood depends on catching fish.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of fishing with a friend of mine for a couple days on Wheeler Lake in North Alabama. At the time, Matt fished the FLW tour and was in town for a tournament. On this tour, anglers are allowed two practice days to get acquainted with the lake and the conditions. I fished those two days with him. The conditions were less than ideal. It was early spring, rainy, and windy. We spent a lot of time examining the topography of the lake, looking for channels, points, and ledges. Then we fished the places we marked, trying to figure out which lures and presentations the fish would bite. Everything learned during those practice days along with any other information known or gained from others Matt incorporated into his game plan for the tournament.

It is not just professional fishermen who are looking for an edge. The everyday recreational fisherman is doing the same things. This angler is reading magazine articles, watching television shows, and following YouTube channels to learn new tricks and strategies. He is paying attention to the topography and every bit of data that his electronics provide. He is also talking to other anglers to see what they are using to catch fish. Anglers, both professional and recreational, do these things because the goal of fishing is to catch fish. The objective is to put fish in the boat.

Today, we are going to look again at a passage we studied a couple weeks ago. We learned four things from it that are involved in following Jesus. One of those things we learned is that when we follow Jesus there is an awareness of mission. Jesus told Peter from this point forward he would be catching men (Luke 5:10). This new kind of fishing was to be the mission of not only his life, but also that of Andrew, James, and John.

The Lord used a mighty catch of fish to transform these fishermen’s perspectives and prove He is able to make them successful. As followers of Jesus, we too have been called to this same mission. We have been called to go fishing...fishing for men, women, boys, and girls. Just as a fisherman may feel overwhelmed by the enormity and complexity of a new lake, a Christ-follower often feels overwhelmed by the call to share the gospel with sinners. It is a tall order. People are all different. On top of that complexity, we are dealing with people’s eternity. So, we wonder how we can catch fish and be successful doing it. I want us to see that confident trust in the Lord Jesus is the key to leading sinners to faith in Christ.

Read Luke 5:1-11.

Inquiry: If you recall, on this occasion, Jesus is in Gennesaret. It is a few miles southwest of Capernaum on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. Luke describes Jesus as being by the lake of Gennesaret. The description serves primarily as a geographical purpose.

Luke has presented Jesus' preaching ministry to us. "*He was preaching in the synagogues of Judea*" (4:44). Apparently, the Lord also preached in other places than the synagogues. Here a crowd is following Him. They are interested in hearing what He has to say, so they are pressing in on Him (5:1). All of this was taking place on the bank of the lake where the fishermen were tending their nets.

Fishing was done during the night on the Sea of Galilee because the fishermen used nets to catch the fish in the shallow waters. They would work together with other boats to drag the nets through the water and catch the fish that came up to feed. In the mornings, they would bring the nets to shore and remove the big fish that would be sold. Then, the fishermen would wash their nets and set them out to dry.

Simon and Andrew, two brothers, were washing their nets after an unsuccessful night of fishing. They had already met Jesus in Capernaum. Perhaps, they had even followed Him for a while after Simon's mother-in-law had been healed. At some point, however, the two brothers returned to their trade. On this occasion, Jesus finds the brothers in Gennesaret, and He asked Simon to anchor just offshore. Jesus then used their boat as a preaching platform to teach the people.

Simon, Andrew, James, and John listened to Jesus' teaching along with the crowd as they washed their nets. Surely, their hearts were moved by the Word of God just as Simon's heart had been moved in Capernaum. When Jesus was finished, He told Simon to row out to the deep water and put his nets out. This request was profound. He was asking a man who had not slept all night and who had spent the night examining empty net meshes to beach the boat, load several hundred pounds of nets, and circle around in the deep water while the sun was beating down on them. This incredible request came from a stoneworker and not another experienced fisherman.

Professional fishermen know how to catch fish. If they do not, then their business quickly dries up. Professional fishermen understand that to catch fish, you must go to the fish. You cannot stay on the bank and expect the fish to come to the boat. They also know you must trust the presentation. At times the presentation may not make much sense. I have often wondered why and how a largemouth bass strikes a hunk of metal and rubber. Furthermore, fishermen know you must rely on your resources. They rely on their knowledge of the lake, the conditions, and experience. Simon knew how to catch fish, but presumably Jesus did not. Regardless, he was willing to go along because he had seen Jesus heal the sick and cast out demons. He knew Jesus to possess authority as the title "*Master*" in verse 5 conveys.

Simon and Andrew let down their nets and quickly caught so many fish that they could not haul them to shore. The nets were breaking, so James and John came out to help. The catch was so large, the weight of the fish was placing both boats in danger of sinking. As Simon witnessed this miracle, he was overwhelmed by Jesus. Through this encounter with Jesus, Simon was called to follow Him. In that moment he learned Jesus could be trusted. He also learned the keys to catching fish...catching men.

In this passage Peter and Andrew are catching fish, but from it I want us to learn three keys to leading people to faith in Jesus Christ:

1. Go to the people.

Jesus said,

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... – Matt 28:19a

Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. – Mark 16:15

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. – John 20:21

...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
– Acts 1:8b

Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. – Luke 5:4

One of the first things we need to know about catching fish is that you cannot stay on the bank. It is impossible to remain where you are and expect the fish to come to you. The same is true when it comes to sharing the gospel. Simon was told to put out into the deep and let down his nets. He and Andrew had to leave where they were to go to where the fish were. As followers of Christ, we too must leave where we are to go to where those in need of Christ are.

You see, the Great Commission is a “go and tell” enterprise. It is not a “come and see” one. If we are honest, we would prefer people to come and see rather than to go out and tell them. We prefer it because it is not as difficult. What makes going and telling so difficult? Going out can be difficult because:

- It forces you out of your comfort zone.
Simon was comfortable fishing in the shallow waters.
- It requires effort.
Simon had to row out after working all night and morning.
- It can be dangerous.
Fishing in deep waters is much more dangerous than the shallows.

We need not ever forget that Jesus never called us to an easy task. In fact, He called us to an impossible task. Think about it. We are commissioned to take a message to sinners that calls them to humble themselves and turn from their sin. It calls rebels to bow in submission to the God they have rejected. It demands that sinners forsake their worldly pursuits and find satisfaction in Christ. This kind of message will never be attractive to people who are dead in sin. This unattractiveness means that it does not matter how big of a show the church might put on, it will never appeal to those who are spiritually blind. They will not be impressed. Then again, God never intended for them to be impressed with the church’s productions. Instead, God purposed the church to scatter and to go and tell.

The church’s game plan is not to build something so they will come. No, our game plan is to build one another up so that we can go and tell others the Good News of Jesus. Christian, the Lord expects and has called you to spread the good news of the gospel where you live, work, and play (Acts 1:8). He has sent you there to tell others about Him, and you are the best person for that job. You are the most equipped and prepared because you know the people. You have the relationships, and the gospel travels best over the bridge of relationships.

The first key to leading people to faith in Christ is to go to the people. Who can and should you go to this week?

Well, if we are to go to others with a message that is unattractive, how can we be successful?

2. Trust the word of the gospel.

Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets. – Luke 5:5

Simon Peter trusted the words of Jesus. As Christians we too should trust the words of Jesus. We have been commissioned by Him to *“go into all the world and proclaim the gospel”* (Mark 16:15). We trust not only His commission of us but also the message of our commission. Like the Apostle Paul, we trust the word of the gospel.

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. – Romans 1:16

When it comes to leading people to faith in Christ, what else is there to trust in other than the power of the gospel? We certainly do not want to trust in our own communication skills or abilities. Simon was a professional fisherman, but when Jesus asked him to put out into the deep, he trusted the word of the Lord rather than his experience and knowledge.

Christian, we need to remember that it is through the power of the gospel message that lost sinners find forgiveness and redemption in Christ. Now, we dare not use this reality as an excuse to not prepare or develop skills in sharing the gospel. We do, however, realize that ultimately the burden rests upon the Lord’s shoulders and not ours. We simply want to go to others with the gospel, trusting its power to transform lives, which brings us to a third key.

3. Rely on the power of God.

Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets. – Luke 5:5

There in the deep Simon was relying upon the power of God to bring in a catch. If he had been relying upon his own power and ability, then he would have been in the shallows. Instead, he was out in the deep, trusting Jesus’ word and relying on His power. When we seek to lead sinners to faith in Jesus, we dare not think that we have the power to bring about any sort of change in the life of another person. We have nothing to give outside of the message of the gospel. As we share it though, we are relying on the infinite power of God to transform sinners. After all, only God can raise the dead (Eph 2:1-2).

Jesus said, *“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”* (Acts 1:8). As followers of Christ, we rely on God’s power to work in and through our lives as we share the gospel with sinners. In doing so, the gospel transforms lives. We see evidence of this in Thessalonica as Paul and Silas preached.

Read Acts 17:2-4.

Persecution from the Jews caused Paul and Silas to leave the city prematurely, so the apostle was concerned about the spiritual welfare of the Thessalonians. He and Silas sent Timothy to check on them. He brought back news of their continued faith and love (1 Thess 3:6). The Thessalonians had been and were being transformed by the gospel. Paul and Silas had relied on the power of God as they preached Jesus to them, and the power of God continued to do a great work among them.

Conclusion: The Lord used a mighty catch of fish to transform perspectives of four anglers. Through it God proved He was able to make them successful in their commission to fish for men. As followers of Jesus, we too have been called to this same mission. We have been called to go fishing...fishing for men, women, boys, and girls.

Like professional fishermen, we must understand that to catch fish, we must go to the fish. We cannot stay on the bank and expect the fish to come to the boat. We must also know to trust the presentation. Furthermore,

like fishermen we must rely on our resources. We must rely upon the Master's power. We must place confident trust in the Lord Jesus, for this is the key to leading sinners to faith in Christ.

Christian, the Lord expects and has called you to spread the good news of the gospel where you live, work, and play. Are you going to them? Are you trusting the word of the gospel? Are you relying on the power of God?

For those who are still in sin and in need of Christ's forgiveness. Today, Jesus is coming to you. You have heard the word of the gospel. And the power of God to transform your life is available. All you need to do is call out to Jesus in repentance and faith.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ? What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today? Do you need to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?