



“Following Jesus”
Luke 5:1-11

Idea: The logic of the Kingdom is to follow Jesus, for He can be trusted.

Intro: Whether you are a fisherman or not, you probably know that most “fishing stories” are more of a tall-tale than a true account of what happened. The fish gets bigger with each telling. What is even more interesting about the tall-tale is that the fisherman is nearly always alone, and the fish gets away.

Back in high school, I used to fish some with a friend of mine. Now, out on the lake together, we usually did well. We caught a decent number of fish, but I do not ever remember us catching a monster bass. However, I can remember a lot of Monday mornings at school hearing him talk about how he had lost a six-pound largemouth or a four-pound smallmouth at the boat on Saturday. Maybe he did lose a lot of big fish at the edge of the boat. All I know is that was never duplicated when I was in the boat with him. Therefore, it seemed more like a tall-tale fishing story than anything else.

As we come to chapter 5 in Luke’s Gospel, Luke tells a fishing story. It is not a tall-tale story like we are used to hearing. In fact, the main idea of the story does not even revolve around the act of fishing. Instead, it focuses on the idea of following Jesus. Luke presents to Theophilus and his readers a description of how people should respond to Jesus’ preaching. Four fishermen (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) will all decide to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. We discover in these verses that the logic of the Kingdom is to follow Jesus, for He can be trusted.

[Read Luke 5:1-11.](#)

Inquiry: 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. As I have shared with you before, the Hebrews often described or named the lake from the location of the story or event. For example, if one is looking at a situation from the vantage point of the city of Tiberias, then the body of water is called the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1). Here the story unfolds in Gennesaret, so the body of water is referred to as the lake of Gennesaret. In other places, it is simply called the Sea of Galilee. The description serves primarily a geographical purpose rather than a theological one.

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 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. Last fall, a group of guys from Red Lane and I chartered a guide on Smith Mountain Lake to fish for striped bass. We spent the day motoring around in an incredible boat, looking for schools of fish. When we found them, we caught fish. Our guide could not afford his boat, much less put food on the table for his family if he did not know where the fish were and how to catch them. Simon knew how to catch fish, but presumably Jesus did not. Regardless, he was willing to play along because he had seen Jesus heal the sick and cast out demons. He knew Jesus to possess authority as the title "*Master*" conveys (5:5).

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. He had his own Isaiah 6 moment. His perspective of Jesus changed from "*Master*" to "*Lord*" as he experienced this theophany. Jesus, then, explained that the logic of the Kingdom of God is to follow Jesus, for He can be trusted.

As Christians, we follow Jesus. We abide in and share His Kingdom with others. It is an upside-down kingdom. It does not make sense from a worldly perspective. It is often difficult to understand how a kingdom can largely exist by simply following Jesus, but that is exactly what Luke's Gospel and the teaching of the New Testament teaches. What does it mean to follow Jesus? What is involved? From this passage, I want you to see four things that are involved.

Following Jesus involves:

1. A humble heart.

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

I do not believe it is a stretch to think that Simon did not really believe they would catch much. I am not saying he completely discounted Jesus' words because he did not. Simon rowed out and let down the nets just as Jesus instructed (4:5). He, however, never expected to see such a catch. No one had ever even told a story that big, much less witness it. So, when they caught all those fish, Simon was moved by Jesus and not by the fish. The Lord used the catch of fish to move Simon's and the other men's hearts to a place of humility.

Simon gained a proper perspective of Jesus. He saw his sinfulness contrasted against the backdrop of Jesus' holiness. He felt a moral agony in the presence of the Lord. This same experience was felt by Isaiah (Is 6), Job (Job 42:5-6), and John (Rev 1:17). According to R. Kent Hughes, this experience and response to Jesus "is a great grace, because moral agony, an inner writhing over one's sin, is a necessary prelude to the grace of forgiveness."

Following Jesus requires humility. It demands the bowing of our knees in surrender and submission to Him. It necessitates an awareness of one's sin and condemnation before holy God. This awareness does not drive us away from the Lord but toward the Lord. We understand that alone we stand condemned before God, and we are powerless to do anything to better our predicament. In Jesus, however, we stand forgiven and redeemed. In humility we bring our sinfulness and lay it before Jesus. You see, Simon's statement in verse 8 is idiomatic for "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

There is a second thing involved in following Jesus.

2. A confident trust.

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

Luke purposely used the title of "Master" (Ἐπιστάτα) (8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13). He is the only New Testament author to use it, and he completely avoided the use of the title "Rabbi" (teacher) for Jesus. Again, we do not want to view Simon's words as disobedience. He might not have expected much, but he did obey Jesus' word. Instead, we want to see how Simon agreed to do something that at face value might have appeared foolish. Through this event, Simon learned the importance of confidently trusting Jesus despite how ridiculous things might appear.

Following Jesus does not always make sense on paper. It did not make sense to listen a fishing report given by a stone mason. Similarly, on paper, it did not make sense for these four men to leave everything (businesses and family) to follow Jesus. Simon and the others did it because they confidently trusted Jesus with their lives.

Likewise, it does not always make sense on paper to follow what Jesus is calling us to do. It may not sound logical to find forgiveness and redemption through confession, repentance, and faith in Him, but Jesus calls us to that rather than good works and religious activity. It may not make sense to our accountants to give at least 10% of our gross income back to the Lord through the local church, but in God's economy it is the only thing that makes sense. It may not make sense to walk away from a promising career to go into vocational ministry or become a missionary. It may not seem logical to use your vacation time to take the gospel to those who have never heard it. It may not sound sensible to invest your time and energy in people who care nothing about the things of God. These things do not make sense on paper, but when God calls us to engage in them, we trust Him. We confidently trust that He knows best and will use us to do a great work.

There is a third thing involved in following Jesus.

3. An awareness of mission.

"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." – Luke 5:10b

There is an incredibly beautiful aspect to this encounter. The holy presence of Jesus not only confronts Simon about his sinfulness, but it also invites him on mission to bring this knowledge to others. The word translated "catching men" (ζωγρέω) is a combination of two Greek words that gives the sense of

“catching alive.” Simon and other followers of Jesus will catch men for life and not for death. Jesus told the people in Capernaum, *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose”* (4:43). Now, He commissions and sends Simon, Andrew, James, and John on the same mission. Last week we emphasized that this commission is for every believer. It is not placed just on the vocational minister. No, every Christian is a minister of the gospel in his or her circles of influence. 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.

Following Jesus brings an awareness of mission. If you have not or are not stepping into this awareness, then maybe you are not following Jesus as closely as you think. There is a fourth thing involved in following Jesus.

4. A reckless abandonment.

...they left everything and followed Him. – Luke 5:11b

This decision might not have made sense to their families and friends, but it was the best and most sensible thing they could do in response to Jesus’ calling on their lives. They were willing to lay everything down and go with Jesus.

Is this not what it means to follow Jesus? Is this not what discipleship looks like? Following Jesus is costly. There is a high price to pay for discipleship, and not everyone is willing to pay it (John 6:60).

If Jesus were to call you to go serve on a short-term mission trip overseas, would you be willing to go? If you sensed Him calling you to start a Bible study in your office, would you do it? If He began to call you into vocational ministry, would you leave your career or future career to serve the Lord in full-time ministry? If He called you to give more or sell something and give the money to the church, would you recklessly abandon it for the sake of the Kingdom?

As followers of Jesus, we live with our palms up. We understand that Jesus is our Master and Lord. He owns everything, and we are simply His stewards. All that I have is His, even my own life. This perspective on life may not make worldly sense, but the logic of the Kingdom of God is to follow Jesus because He can be trusted.

Conclusion: This passage is not your typical fishing story. It is not a tall-tale. Instead, it is a beautiful story of the grace of God. Did you notice that the holy comes to the sinner? Did you also notice in the story that when the sinner sees his sin, rather than sending him away, Jesus invites him to come closer? Jesus says, “Join Me.” We see in this fishing story a holiness that uses a confessing sinner in its mission. This holiness calls and commissions the sinner to become a fisher of men. Here is a holiness so stunningly beautiful it causes a group of men to leave everything for its sake. It provides the former sinner a new sense of purpose, direction, and calling.

If you are in relationship with Jesus, are you following Him? Do you walk humbly before the Lord? Do you possess a confident trust in His leadership? Are you aware of your mission? Have you abandoned everything for the cause of Christ?

If you are not in relationship with Jesus, do you see the Lord’s holiness and your own sinfulness? Do you hear His call to follow Him? Contrary to what you might expect to hear from Jesus, He is not saying, “Get away from me you sinner!” No, He is saying, “Look to me, find forgiveness for your sin, and join Me.” He is also not saying, “Just try harder; be more religious.” Will you come to Him?

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?