

Luke 5:1-11

“Called into Grace”

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 10, 2019

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Vicar Otterman

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Introduction]

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus was standing by the lake Gennesaret, also known as the sea of Galilee.

And a crowd of people, who had heard about this new teacher who spoke with authority, pressed in on Jesus, eager to hear him teach and hoping to see one of his miracles. As the crowds approached him, Jesus saw a fishing boat and climbed into it, and the boat that he chose belonged to a man named Simon, who we now know as the Apostle Peter.

At this point in time, Simon was already aware of Jesus, because after teaching in the nearby town of Capernaum, Jesus stayed at Simon’s house and even healed his mother-in-law of her high fever.

Simon knew about the power of Jesus’ words, so when Jesus asked him to put the boat out a little ways from land, he did it. And when Jesus was finished teaching and told him to cast out his nets, he did that too, even though he had just come back from a long night of unsuccessful fishing.

Simon trusted Jesus and obeyed him. And when the nets were pulled up, where they had once caught nothing, now the nets were so full that they had to have a second boat come and help bring in the nets before they broke under the abundance of fish.

When he saw this, Simon Peter was astonished and fell down at Jesus’ knees and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Simon saw the power of Jesus. He saw that he could heal the sick with a word, and that he could summon fish from the sea at his will. Simon realized that he was standing in the presence of holiness. So he responded by begging Jesus to leave

him, because he knew he was sinful. And his sinfulness made him afraid, because he knew that sinful things cannot stand in the presence of God's holiness.

[*In the Presence of Holiness*]

To us who know that Jesus came to forgive our sins and save us from death, his reaction may seem strange. But Simon reacted appropriately for a person who realized he was in God's presence, just like we see elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Out of fear, Simon did not want to hear Jesus, just like the Israelites when they cried out to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." (*Exodus 20:19*)

Out of fear, Simon did not want to see Jesus, just like the prophet Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (*Isaiah 6:5*)

Simon's fear of God's judgement brought him to his knees, and it was all he could do to beg Jesus to depart from him.

[*Do Not Be Afraid*]

But Jesus loved Simon just as God has always loved His people even when they are sinful and unworthy to stand in His presence.

When the people of Israel were afraid to hear God speak, Moses said to them, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." (*Exodus 20:20*)

When Isaiah despaired at having seen the Lord of Hosts, God sent an angel to him, and it touched his lips with a burning coal and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (*Isaiah 6:6-7*)

And when Simon Peter begged Jesus to depart from him, Jesus responded by saying, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (*Luke 5:10*)

Rather than smiting them for their sin, God continually shows his mercy to his people, telling them not to be afraid and forgiving their sins. In Jesus, Simon Peter heard the Word of God directly, “Do not be afraid.” These words, which Jesus spoke to Simon Peter and now speak to you, are a promise of peace and a promise of God’s love for you despite your failures.

[Fishers of Men]

But God doesn’t only give us peace from our fear. He also gives us purpose by calling us to serve Him. He called Israel to be his people so that they would live faithfully with Him. He called Isaiah to proclaim God’s word to the nations, and he called Simon Peter to be an Apostle, casting out the net of God’s word and drawing people into Christ’s church.

Like Simon Peter, you and I have been brought into the grace of Christ through the sweet words of forgiveness we have in Jesus. We’ve been baptized with the water and the words of promise that our sins are forgiven and that our lives are secured in heaven with our Lord.

As part of the church, we too are called to follow Jesus and become fishers of men. The fact that we are called to serve Christ doesn’t mean that we have to become exactly like Simon Peter. The church is like a body with many parts, and God calls us to a certain place and to serve in a certain way.

Whatever callings we’ve been given, God desires for each of us to participate in the work of the church, whether that is through the witness of faithful preaching, administration, or the service of physical labor. God gives us each different gifts and abilities to serve him and to serve our neighbor.

We are called into the body of Christ and thus into the work of the church, but like Simon Peter, like Isaiah, and like Israel, it is easy to think that we are too sinful to actually be able to serve God. Even in the church we often try to push Jesus away, because we doubt ourselves and are afraid of failing to live up to God’s standards.

But Jesus doesn’t leave us in our fear. Just like he said to Simon Peter, Jesus comes to us and says, “Do not be afraid.” He purifies us and washes us clean with his own

blood that he shed for us on the cross. And he gives us new life through his resurrection. His perfect life is at work in us.

So don't be afraid. Where you fail, he will succeed through you. Where you falter, your weakness will be a witness to his strength.

Jesus abides with you and in you. He forgives your sins and makes you holy. In him, you do not have to fear.

Because Jesus has spoken words of forgiveness to you at your baptism, you can stand in the presence of your Lord, relying on Him for your strength and serving him in all that you do. Amen

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
