

## **Sermon: Jesus' First Disciples**

**Text: Luke 5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16**

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**Introduction:** Growing up I had a number of people showing me how to fish. They helped me pick out equipment, the right kind of bait, and we'd go out to the river or one of the small lakes around Piqua. There was Swift Run and Echo Lake and a canal system that must have run a mile or more that connected the two. I even fished in the local cemetery pond which was full of small bluegill, yellow-belly catfish and this one illusive 5 lb. smallmouth bass that literally shattered my cane pole one afternoon.

But the best experience I ever had fishing was when I went up to Grand Lake St. Mary's with a friend. We caught about 75 crappies in less than an hour. We could not bait our hooks quickly enough. It is a lake that covers about 13,500 acres near Celina, Ohio. Lake Pymatuning, north of here in Pennsylvania, I think is right at 17,000 acres. The lake in our story, called Gennesaret here in Luke, is also called Tiberias, but more commonly the Sea of Galilee. It covers 40,000 acres and is about 15 miles long and 8 miles wide. We probably all have our own fishing stories.

It had been a very poor night for commercial fishing. These soon-to-be disciples were, I am sure, tired and discouraged; but Jesus wanted to take this opportunity to extend a time of teaching. That was, after all, his main purpose in ministry before we get to the cross. Even the miracles he performed lent themselves to another time of instruction.

**Luke 5:1-11 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup>For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup>and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup>So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

The current “leadership” slogan that a leader will only rise as far as the people he puts around him must not apply to Jesus. Certainly there were many people who questioned Jesus’ selection of disciples. His disciples seemed to be unlearned, unqualified, undeserving, and even undesirable.

You may have heard a proposed reason for Jesus’ going out from shore to teach from Peter’s boat. Some have said he needed the room because of the press of the crowd. Maybe he wanted to sit down to teach. Others have suggested that the surface of the water would provide a natural amplification of his voice. Where that may be true, I think Jesus must have intentionally seen Peter before and had plans to involve him in his ministry of the Word.

It says in the text the fishermen *were washing their nets*. They were more than likely listening to Jesus, and once he took their boat away from the shore, I am pretty sure they started watching him, too.

Yet, Jesus had only a few real requirements for those wanting to be one of his followers.

## **I. Disciples Need to Be Teachable.**

### **A. God knows best.**

God knows best whom to select for leadership. And when it’s God’s choice, great things can happen. Peter is picked to be an agent for God’s miraculous works. This text ([5:1-11](#)) is considered an epiphany text where God shows himself in his power and control over creation.

And even though Peter and his business partners are the professional fisherman, they allow for the possibility that Jesus knows something they do not.

And even though they had fished all night and caught nothing, and going out in the heat of the day made no sense to them, they said maybe Jesus knows something we do not.

Because Peter was willing to accept Jesus’ words, they received a blessing beyond their imagination. Their nets were breaking and additional boats were called to help. And in just a few hours I would imagine, Jesus said: now as great as that was, I have something better for you in mind.

Peter felt the weight of this gift and <sup>8</sup>[When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”](#)

But never fear, just like Peter and the other fishermen

### **B. God accepts us like we are.**

We are the ones who truly understand how sick we really are when we are found in Christ's presence. "In Jesus' eyes sin does not disqualify; the same power that prompted Simon to fall at Jesus' knees now lifts him into God's service." - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 70

Skill is not the issue for Jesus, only that those who would work for Him and with Him understand that success is in His able hands. We are limited in our understanding, yet willing to trust Him for the outcome.

We are all fearful when we come face-to-face with Jesus (God) yet "perfect love casts out all fear."

## II. Disciples Need to Be Willing

### A. to repent.

**Mark 2:17 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup>On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Where Matthew and Mark do not use the word in the *same* context, Luke's account adds the word "repentance" to His call for disciples.

**Luke 5:32 (NIV)** <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

*Repentance* is a key word for Luke. It is what Peter will command by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. "Repentance is both a gift and a demand of the age ushered in by the presence and the preaching of Jesus." - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 79

When one repents there is a change in one's mind which results in a change of direction. Because of the type of people Jesus sometimes chooses, no one should get the idea that the Kingdom is not without ethical standards. Repentance also calls for a change of behavior. This type of commitment clarifies one's life and causes us:

### B. to follow.

**Luke 5:27-32 (NIV)** <sup>27</sup>After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, <sup>28</sup>and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. <sup>29</sup>Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. <sup>30</sup>But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" <sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

**In any crowd there may be a number of responses to Jesus' words. (*Craddock Stories*, p. 36) "I remember one night, sitting in a little rural church on a Sunday night. It was a summer meeting, so it was hot, and the window was open beside my pew. The minister was preaching on his favorite text, 'Be not the first by whom the new road is tried, because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and it's better to be safe than sorry, because fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'**

**I was listening to him drone away when a man came by the church building and stopped by the window and said, 'Psst, psst.'**

**I said, 'What is it? I'm listening to the sermon.'**

**He said, 'Come with me.'**

**I said, 'Where are you going?'**

**He said, 'I know where there is a pearl of great price that's more valuable than all the other pearls in the world.'**

**I said, 'There's no such thing.'**

**He said, 'In fact, where I'm going, there is treasure buried in a field.'**

**I said, 'You're kidding!'**

**He said, 'Where I'm going, bums are invited to sit down at the king's table.'**

**I said, 'That's ridiculous.'**

**He said, 'In fact, they give great big parties for prodigals who come home.'**

**I said, 'That's stupid.' Well, I listened to the rest of the sermon and after it was over, I told the preacher about how I was disturbed and that I hoped it didn't upset him during the sermon.**

**He said, 'Who was that?'**

**I said, 'I don't know. Telling me all this fancy stuff.'**

**He said, 'Well, was he getting anybody?'**

**And I said, 'Well, none of our crowd went, but I noticed he had about twelve with him.'**

**I wonder how many of the crowd the next day noticed that Peter and his fishing partners were gone or those at Levi's party, that his tax booth was empty. A boat broker had a 20-30 foot boat, and a head hunter had an opening for a commission-based tax collection job.**

I know people ask: how could Peter and the others like Matthew (Levi) have just gotten up, left everything, and followed Jesus? It does not surprise me because people take Jesus that seriously everyday. I know I did!

That a person would leave everything is not so amazing. What *is* so amazing is the grace that produces the job offer to follow the Creator of the universe.

### III. Disciples Need to Be Leaders

#### A. to people they know

What did Levi do after his decision to follow Jesus? He got his friends together and told them about the change in his life and his new vocation.

He threw a party in Jesus' honor to introduce him to others. Dee suggested this a few years ago at an annual meeting. Even though we never really did it. A few years ago it was popular for churches to rent out venues, feed their invited guests a great meal, and have a high-powered evangelistic appeal made.

You might have noticed the change in grammar in our first call account. It goes from Jesus addressing Simon Peter to a group of the fishermen following. It goes from "you" to "they."

**Luke 5:10-11 (NIV)** <sup>10</sup>and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup>So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

"The fishing metaphor is an appropriate one for evangelism. Catching fish is by no means automatic, as Peter's outing the night before showed." - Bock, *Luke*, p. 161

Only with God's help is success guaranteed.

#### B. to people who think they know us

We do not know people like God does. The person we think has no potential for the Kingdom may be the next great evangelist or missionary. God has the power to lift us and change our status from sick to well and from sinner to saint.

There will be people who will judge us from incomplete information, but we need to follow Jesus and help lead others to Him. Peter's vocation had certainly changed. He is now to catch men rather than fish.

"Unlike fish, which are caught to be flayed and devoured, Peter will catch people and (help) bring them into life." - Bock, *Luke*, p. 155

A call to ministry by God changes everything!

## *Disciples Need to Be Leaders*

### C. to people who *think* they know God

There are people inside the church and lost people outside the church who think they know God. You can lecture them, condemn them and ridicule them, but rarely have I seen that technique work. Pagans today and modern-day Pharisees have one thing in common: arrogance (pride).

Even the church is accused of a similar malady called self-righteousness.

“The Pharisees prefer a level of quarantine from sinners; Jesus prefers to aim for recovery of the sinners.” - Bock, Luke, p. 159

The question may be: am I at table with Jesus and his tax-collector friends or am I among his critics telling others how he isn't doing it right - while all the time doing nothing myself?

It is easy to complain and condemn, but how about being a leader who offers help and understanding? Really what is needed is love and patience. If we are to be leaders, our lives need to be consistent with our confessions. And most of us could be more humble. After all if God can use us, He can use them. “Humility is the elevator to spiritual greatness.” - Bock, *Luke*, p. 155

Jesus said: **Luke 5:32 (NIV)** <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” That seems to be the key!

**Conclusion:** **Luke 6:12-16 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup>One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. <sup>13</sup>When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: <sup>14</sup>Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup>Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup>Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Darrell Bock in his “NIV Application Commentary” (*Luke* p. 160) says: “The important thing is what happens after one experiences a sense of helplessness upon confronting God. Jesus cannot have a disciple, a ‘learner,’ until one realizes there is much to learn!”

One should notice the diversity of the disciples: men and women from all walks and experiences of life. It is still true today that the Church is multi-colored and a tapestry of various cultures and callings. As much change that has happened over the last 2000 years, a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ, must still be teachable, willing, and a leader for his world.

**Once called, not everyone makes it to the end. Some drop out, quit, or just lose heart. But remember the Apostle Paul's words to the church:**

**I Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV)** <sup>24</sup>Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup>No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**At the end of our days maybe we too can say:**

**II Timothy 4:7 (NIV)** <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.