

Called and Sent

February 10, 2019

Luke 5: 1-11

¹ Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.



For the past few weeks we have been talking about the beginnings of Jesus' ministry: His baptism, His first miracle, and His declaration of His mission to be a light to the whole world. Today we see Jesus calling His first disciples. Let us pray...

For each of us who have responded to God's call, there was a moment when we heard the call of Jesus to come and follow. For some, it is a flash – a blast of understanding, a revelation after which life will never be the same. For others, for most I believe, it is more gradual. If you are like me, you cannot point to a particular day or an exact time when you finally knew what God was asking you to do. You have no "on December 2 at 2:00 in the afternoon" moment. We have a general idea and can follow the progression from coming to church and hearing the stories of Noah and the ark through coming to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We can probably even name events and experiences that moved us closer to Jesus, but there is not a day when we went from not being a Christian to being a Christian.

We have several examples of answering God's call in the Bible. We have some that are gradual responses, like most of ours were. Isaiah began his ministry in the year that King Uzziah died. Jeremiah began his ministry in the time when Israel was being carried off into exile. Both prophets were called by God and began to work by sharing God's word with the people. And then we have Paul's experience. It was a very sudden, never-be-the-same-again moment. Walking along the road to Damascus, Jesus struck him blind and asked Paul why he was persecuting Jesus' church. I think events can also trigger us. Events can jump-start our faith, or they can get us back on our walk of faith. The event can be life-altering - like 9/11 was for many people. Or they can be personal – graduation, the week you lost your job, the day your child got sick, the day a mentor affirmed you. These events can drive us back to God or to seek God.

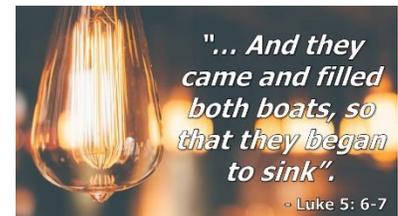
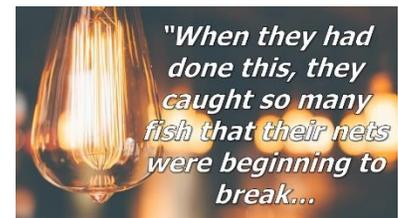
For James and John and for Peter in today's passage, it was the moment that Jesus stepped into their boats. They were just hanging out after a long night's work. They were tired from fishing and were probably grumpy from not having anything to show for all their hard work. They are sitting there that morning, washing their nets so that the nets are ready to go when they return later to begin another night of fishing. Jesus had appeared by the lake and began to preach. As the crowd began to grow, it pressed in on Him. To get a little space between Himself and the crowd, Jesus asks an unsuspecting fisherman to get back into the boat and to put out a little way from shore so that He could continue to teach. And just like that Jesus had Simon Peter right where He wanted him. Not only can't he work on his nets, he cannot go home when he is done with them.



Has this ever happened to you? Has Jesus ever worked you right to where He wanted you to be and then sprang something on you? Maybe you were not even aware that Jesus was at work in your life. Or maybe you knew He was at work, but you had no clue what curve was about to come up in the road. Has Jesus ever led you to teach a Sunday school class when suddenly He asks you to help with the youth group too? Has Jesus ever led you to lead the youth group and then sprang it upon you that He wants you to be a pastor too? Has Jesus ever led you to lead a growing youth group and to begin to develop some adult ministries and to begin to do a little preaching as well when He suddenly informs you that you are moving to Winner? Oh, good - me neither.

Jesus finally gets done preaching. Peter must have been so thankful. At least John and James have hung around so that he has someone to walk home with. And then Jesus says it. *"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch"*. Can you see Peter's shoulders sag? Can you hear the sigh? We hear the feeble protest that Peter offers up. *"Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets"*. If I have to, then I will. Watch out because here comes the curve in the road.

"When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink".



Not just a few fish. Not just a nice catch. So many fish that their boats were beginning to sink. Wow.

Simon Peter is not tired anymore. Simon Peter has his moment. That moment when God calls. And – boom! – life is never the same again. This is Peter's moment of call. He falls at Jesus' feet and proclaims, *"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man"*. I hear you calling, I see what you have just done. I can now even see that you got me into this boat this morning just so that you could throw this curve my way. How unworthy I am. In an instant Peter recognizes Jesus as the Lord. In that same moment, he realizes how unworthy he is to be in the Lord's presence. Go away Jesus. I am a sinner.



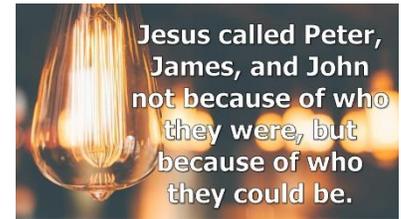
Peter's response, that he is utterly "unworthy" to be in Jesus' presence, is often our first response too. Cast in the light of Jesus' love and perfection, we realize pretty quickly that no person is good enough, strong enough, pure enough... to be in Jesus' holy and almighty presence. Yet, like Peter, we are called anyway. And as we accept and then seek to follow our call, as we explore how we are each being sent into the world, we will encounter people who are where we once were at: feeling not good enough, not strong enough, not pure enough... to know Jesus. As we model the acceptance and love that Jesus led with, others will come to know that they too are worthy of Jesus' love and acceptance.



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For Peter, James, and John, I am sure they all felt unworthy of the call that Jesus was laying on their lives. But He called them anyway. There were three things that then happened in the text for today. First, acting in spite of insecurity, they launch out. They push off from shore and out into the waters of the lake. Second, in spite of non-expectations – not no expectations but non-expectations - they let down nets. They had fished all night – when they usually fish – and had caught nothing. They did not expect to catch any fish. They expected not to catch any fish. But they did. Remember? The boats almost sank. Then third, leaving all behind they choose to follow Jesus. Peter, James, and John leave everything they know behind; they leave everything they own lying there on the seashore and they follow.

We hear and accept our own call to be part of Jesus' work. We too are called and sent. Jesus chose Peter, James, and John "not because of who they were, but because of who they could be". Jesus calls us for the same reason. He knows the plans that God has for us – plans for our good, plans to prosper us.



We must pause for a moment and ask: What would it look like in our lives if we were to follow in the footsteps of these first disciples who were called and sent? What deep waters is God calling us out into? What would it look like to "let down our nets"? It might mean investing ourselves in a place that intimidates us or scares us. It might mean becoming friends with someone who is different than us or who struggles with something we do not even understand. It might mean stepping out of our boat and out of our comfort zone.

What would it look like to "leave behind our nets and follow Jesus"? What cares of this world would you have to lay aside and leave behind to help others meet Jesus? It might be fear of rejection. It might be anxiety over being able to provide or care for your own family. It might be having to trust more in God than in ourselves. It might just be laying aside worry over what the world thinks of us and just living every moment of every day as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. To close, I share the story of Bud Villers. He was just an ordinary guy in many ways. But he was an extraordinary follower of Jesus Christ. Bud knew that he was called and sent by Jesus to make disciples of all people.



Bud Villers was a good man. Bud was my neighbor. I grew up beside him until he died when I was in college. Bud helped my dad put a roof on our house, he assisted my dad when they poured concrete sidewalks and porches. My dad helped him put a roof on his patio. When Bud got older he would hire me to cut his grass occasionally. He usually invited me in for a glass of Coke and a piece of pie afterwards.

He was always generous. I also delivered his newspaper for a couple of years. He tipped well. He was kind. He didn't get upset if our baseball, whiffle ball, or football went into his yard. Mr. Villers was also an avid fisherman. He often brought us some of his trout catch.

I don't remember Bud talking a lot about religion when I was a kid, but it struck me that EVERY Sunday morning I saw Bud walking up the street with his Bible in hand — rain or shine - Bud walked to church with a Bible in his hand every week. Every year he invited my younger brother and me to attend VBS at the Nutter Fort Baptist Church. Most years we didn't go, but some years, when some of my friends were going, I did go. Then when I was 15, Bud invited us to church on a Sunday. I didn't go, but my younger brother did. And the next weekend he invited us again. Again, I didn't go but my little brother went. The same thing happened the next Sunday and the Sunday after that. My brother started going to church two or three times a week. I caught him reading the Bible a couple of times.

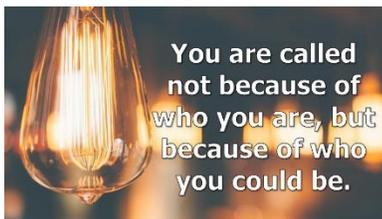
Months later Bud was still inviting me, and I was still not interested. Then a singing group attended my school. They were college students and the girls were really pretty. They performed several songs and they told us that they were going to be at a church that evening, and they wanted us to come. When I got home from school that day, Bud came over and invited my little brother and me to come to church that evening. The singers from the school were going to be there, so I went. That night I became a Christian and my life has never been the same since.

To my knowledge, Bud Villers never taught a Sunday School class, never preached a sermon, never held a position of leadership in the church. He was an usher, a faithful usher. He simply lived a life of integrity and love for God and his family and friends. And occasionally invited people to church. If Bud was an ice cream flavor, he would be vanilla. But he would be HÄAGEN-DAZS vanilla.

Maybe we could all be a lot like Bud Villers – simply living out our faith, inviting a few folks to church or to VBS or to the women’s group or to Agape Circle or to a men’s Bible study. Maybe that is who you are. Maybe that is how you see your call and that is how God is sending you to the world. Or maybe you are like Peter, James, or John. Maybe you feel God calling you to something more, to something that requires you to step out into deep waters, to get out of the comfort of your boat, to trust in Him fully. Maybe you know what that call is, but do not know where or how to begin. Maybe you sense a call but are not sure how or where that might work itself out. If so, pray about it. Seek holy guidance. Come in and share with me what is on your heart.

Whatever the case, make no mistake about it – all work done for the building of the kingdom here on earth brings God glory and is pleasing to God. Big, small, anywhere in between. We are all called to share the good news of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Maybe it is with your neighbor boy. Maybe it is with a group of moms in your neighborhood or in your kid’s class at school. Maybe it is something big and audacious and on the other side of the world. God is calling each of us to service. We are all called.

And remember, just as it was with Peter, James, and John, you are called not



because of who you are, but because of who you could be. God has a plan for you, for your life, for your particular ministry. God has a plan for your good, to prosper you, to use you for the building of His kingdom

here on earth. May we all be willing to answer the call, faithfully going where God sends us. May it be so. Amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) When was your “moment of call” – the moment your faith became your own, when it became real to you?
- 2) What step are you “stuck” on – the launch, the letting down of your nets, the commitment to follow? Pray for God to lead you into the next step.
- 3) None of us are “good enough, strong enough, pure enough” to be worthy of service but we are called anyway. To whom are you being called?

After Morning Prayer: Video: “Clear” (2:01)