

Luke 5:1–11
Trinity V
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
June 30, 2024

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

In our Gospel text for this morning, we hear the account of Jesus calling His inner circle of disciples—Peter, James, and John. These three men beheld our Lord in His glory on the mount of Transfiguration. All three were present at the raising of Jairus’s daughter. And they were closest to Jesus as He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. Along with Andrew, who was the brother of Simon Peter and who introduced his brother to Jesus, all of these most prominent disciples were fishermen turned preachers. Jesus said: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). From that time on, the work of the church is described in terms of fishing.

Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, another name for the Sea of Galilee. The name “Gennesaret” goes back to the Israelite town called Chinnereth in the land of Naphtali, on the western shore of the sea. The name “Gennesaret” actually means “a garden of riches.” The plain of Gennesaret was known as the “paradise of Galilee” on account of its beauty and fertility. Gennesaret is also the place where Jesus performed many miracles (Matt 14:34–36). Our LORD stood at the sea shore and began restoring paradise through His preaching and healing. Soon He would send out His disciple fishermen to do the same. As Ezekiel 47:10 prophesies about the coming kingdom of Christ: “Fishermen will stand beside the sea . . . it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea.” And as we see in Revelation, the leaves of the trees there, in paradise, will be for the healing of the nations.

The disciples would go into all the world as fishers of men, bringing in a great catch for the LORD and restoring fallen creation through the proclamation of God's Kingdom.

The crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear the Word of God. They knew that the words of this man were not the words of an ordinary man. This man is God in the flesh. When Jesus teaches, it is God who is teaching. When Jesus speaks, it is God who is speaking. When Jesus heals, it is God who is re-creating. The crowd was pressing in to hear the word of God flowing forth from the mouth of Jesus. So Jesus got into Simon Peter's boat to teach. With the boat to amplify His voice and with a bit of distance from the land, our LORD could reach more people with His message and not get pushed around by the crowd. The boat was His pulpit, the seashore was His church, the people were His congregation, and soon the fishermen would be His assisting ministers.

After teaching God's Word to the people, Jesus told Simon Peter to put out into the deep and let down the nets for a catch. The fishermen had just been washing their nets, meaning they were all done fishing. They were on night shift and didn't catch anything, and now Jesus is asking them to try again. Simon Peter answered: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." Peter knew this command didn't make sense. He was a professional fisherman and knew that sometimes it's just not your day. Clean your nets, rest, and wait for the next night. But in faith, Simon Peter answers: "at your word I will let down the nets."

It can often seem like our faith contradicts our reason. Just take a moment to go through some of the paradoxes in Scripture: the Trinity, that God is three and yet one. The incarnation, that God and man can be one person in Jesus Christ. That the water of Baptism saves. That in the Lord's Supper the bread is the Body of Christ and the wine is His Blood. That you are both body

and soul. That God elects unto salvation and desires everyone to be saved, but not all come to faith and not all are saved. That you are sinner and saint at the same time. The list of paradoxes in the Christian faith can go on and on. Our small and limited human reason can't wrap itself around the great mysteries of the faith or around the mind of God. His wisdom is so much higher than our wisdom as the heavens are from the earth, or as the east is from the west. Reason can at times seem to contradict our faith, so we are reminded that our reason itself is a gift of God to be used in service to God's Word, not above it but below it. God gives us our reason and understanding to understand what He's saying, not to contradict Him or to think Him out of existence. With Peter we must say: "But at your word I will let down the nets."

The preaching of the Gospel is another such paradox. For a pastor, preaching can often seem futile. You might experience the same thing when you proclaim your faith to others. It can often feel like people have ears but do not hear and eyes but do not see. The proclamation of free forgiveness in Jesus Christ is the most precious good we have on this earth, but people neglect it for what is worthless. They have itching ears and turn elsewhere or they completely lose focus on the LORD. The Apostle Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:17). The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The net of the Gospel is cast into the sea of this world. Many fish slip through the net, but the Gospel is still working. The Word of God does not return to Him void even if it seems like our preaching is useless.

In faith, Simon Peter and his colleagues let down the nets and the LORD did not disappoint. They enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. The other boat came to help out. There were so many fish, the boats began to sink! Here we see two things. One, the almighty power of our LORD Jesus Christ. And two, the abundance of our God. It's

often said that the Bible is not a science textbook. That's true, it's not a science textbook nor does it intend to be. But what we see from the Scriptures is that the God of the Bible is the God of creation, the creator of the world we inhabit. That same creator God became man in Jesus Christ, who shows us time and again that He has authority over everything that exists. Only God could know where the fish were and only God could miraculously make the fish appear in that part of the sea at that time. Jesus shows that He is God almighty. Jesus also shows the abundance of God's provision. God doesn't just provide several fish, enough for a meal. He overdoes it and provides more than enough fish. The teeming of creation shows the abundance of God's nature, and that's what we see here with the abundance of fish. The provision of God overflows for our good.

Of course, for Simon Peter and the other fishermen, this overabundance seemed like it would swamp them. What good is such a great amount of fish if the boats are about to sink and everything is lost? What good is this miracle if the nets break and can't be repaired. If anything, this great catch of fish would set these fishermen back. When Simon Peter saw what was happening, he fell down at Jesus's knees and said: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter understood who he was dealing with. Jesus isn't just a good teacher. He is *the* teacher, the LORD Himself in the form of a man to teach the way to God in Himself, in His death and resurrection. Peter realizes He's in the presence of God, so as a sinner he falls to His knees in fear. He knows that sinners can't stand before the LORD and live. He has a holy fear of Jesus.

When we contemplate God's Word and realize the abundance with which the LORD supplies our every need, both physical and spiritual, we ought to kneel with Peter and confess our sins before the LORD. That's what we do every Sunday in the Confession and Absolution.

We recognize we are in the presence of God, so we kneel and confess our sins. That's what we do everyday in the LORD's prayer, when we kneel before our Father in Heaven and say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The riches of God's kindness, forbearance, and patience are meant to lead us to repentance—to a recognition of our own sins against the holy God—and to faith, or trust, in the gracious provision of our LORD Jesus Christ (Rom 2:4). Everything Jesus has done for you ought to lead you to bow before Him in humble adoration, in repentance and faith. By grace alone you've been caught in His net, in Baptism and in the preached Word. And by grace alone you're kept in the net until you're brought into the boat of eternal life where you belong. Praise the Lord for the grace He shows you!

Everyone was astonished at this miracle Jesus had just worked. Jesus responds with an absolution and a call, saying to Simon Peter: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." Peter, James, and John wouldn't need their boats or their nets anymore. They left everything behind and followed Jesus. The LORD had a task for these men. The fishermen became fishers of men. The LORD worked through their past experiences, through their vocations, to teach something about the work of the Church. That's how the LORD works through you, too. He's not necessarily calling you to leave everything behind to go preach the Gospel. But He is calling you to disentangle yourself from all worldly attachments and focus on eternity. God is working through your life and your Christian example to bring others into the Church, to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ. Though the task might seem overwhelming or futile, trust that the LORD of Earth and sea and sky is working through you in a miraculous way to bring others in. The net of the Gospel is cast into all the world. Many slip through the net and the bad fish are thrown into the furnace (Matt 13:47ff), but God is still working in His own

mysterious way, and in Paradise, you too will see the miraculous catch He has brought in! In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.