

The Great Catch

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[0 : 00] As the Lord will enable us, I would like us now to turn for a short time back to that chapter which we read together, the Gospel of Luke and chapter 5.

We'll read again from verse 3, focusing on the great catch of fishes.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing.

But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish. And their nets were breaking.

[1 : 07] They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

I would like us to consider this great event for a few moments this evening. The great catch of fish. We notice first of all here, the great crowds. That at this point of the ministry of the Lord attended to his teaching ministry.

When he appeared here at the lake, the side of the lake of Gennesaret, the crowds were so dense that he found it difficult to speak to them.

Word had spread around of the miracles that Christ was performing. And wherever Christ went at this time, great crowds followed his preaching ministry.

[2 : 18] Ager to hear what he had to say. Ager to see what he would perform in their company. Here, friends, we read in the opening verse that they were pressing in on him.

Pressing in on Christ, wishing to hear the word of God. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the word of God.

Remember how John's Gospel opens. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Here is the second person of the Trinity.

The Son, the word. And he's preaching to them the words of life. Here is the word made flesh. And we find these great crowds are flocking around him.

Pressing in on him. And here is the Saviour who is eager to reach out and to save souls. Christ didn't go to those who were in high office in the land.

[3 : 26] He didn't go to call the high, the mighty, the noble. Christ went out to the multitude. He's the one that associated with sinners.

And here he is eager to reach out and to save souls. He was no respecter of persons.

The souls of the poor, the souls of the lowest in society, were as precious and valuable in Christ's eyes than the souls of the kings and the royals.

Christ didn't need a grand cathedral or temple to preach in. Here he is, thronged by the crowds at the shores of Lake Gennesaret.

And he calls Peter to allow him into his boat and to thrust out a little from the shore so that he will use this as a pulpit to address the great crowds that are gathered around the side of the lake.

[4 : 49] This was so that they would see him and that they would hear him. And as he addresses the crowd they all pay attention to his teaching.

They're eager to hear what the Lord has to say. There were two fishing boats here. Simon's boat.

One that belonged to Simon and Andrew. And the other boat belonging to the sons of Zebedee.

And the Lord asked Simon if he could make use of this boat as a pulpit.

Now Simon Peter had met the Lord before. We read of them conversing with Peter Simon earlier on in John's Gospel in verse 40.

And here we have Christ being lifted up. The one who when he is lifted up will draw men to himself. Here he is thrusting out a little from the land and preaching to them the words of life.

[6 : 05] And these fishermen these lowly men ordinary men are called into the service of Christ. They're providing their boat for the Lord's service.

They're brought into his closer fellowship. And when Christ has finished his preaching, his discourse, he orders Simon to thrust out, to go out into the lake and to let out his nets for a draft. A draft of fish. The Lord's commanding them to go out and work. It wasn't the Sabbath day, it was a weekday.

And so he asks them to go back to their labour. We're all commanded to work. Work came in at the time of the fall.

When God said to Adam after the curse came on man, By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread. Man was created to look after the earth.

[7 : 30] And so Christ sends these fishermen back out to do their work. Peter had been there with Christ listening to his preaching.

Listening to his sermon and his discourse by the side of the lake in Israel. And now the Lord Jesus will accompany Peter in his work as a fisherman.

And he commands them to cast out their nets. And they do this. They're obedient to the command of Christ. But they bring before him the situation they had the previous night.

Here are experienced fishermen. They said, last night we toiled all night and we caught nothing.

And it was always through the night that these fishermen in that part of the world would fish.

Not during the day. They had returned to shore. They were tired. They had a hard night work with no reward.

[8 : 42] And there as they reached the shore they sat and they listened to the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he commands them to go out again and to return to their labour.

They had worked all night. They had worked all night. But friends, here they were having had fellowship with Christ.

They hadn't slept but they felt renewed in their souls. And they returned out to let out their nets for another draft.

Is it not the same for us as believers when we're weary in the way? Doesn't fellowship with the Lord and the presence of Christ give you that energy and seal to get on with your work and your role in this world?

If we have a blessed Sabbath where we experience the presence of Christ in our souls does that not refresh us to go back out to our labours again?

[9 : 58] You know there are many ministers of the gospel who have had this experience that the disciples had. They've toiled all night. They've taken nothing.

How many Christians go through their lives? They've toiled hard. They've worked for the Lord's cause preaching the gospel witnessing for Christ and so often they have this experience we've toiled all night and we've taken nothing.

And what does the Lord say to them? Well he says the same as he says here. launch out into the deep and let down your net.

We must friend do our duty as believers in Christ. We must continue whether we see fruit for our labours or not to be faithful to God and to leave the results in his hands.

So these fishermen were diligent men. They were industrious men and here the Lord recognises that. He selects these men to be his chosen disciples.

[11 : 30] They were ready to be obedient to his command. And here they are now meeting Jesus of Nazareth, hearing him preach.

Jesus, the carpenter's son, and he's going to tell these experienced fishermen to launch out into the deep and to let out their nets.

But notice friends that they don't object. It seems so unlikely that they are going to have a catch this morning.

But notice what they say, what Peter says, nevertheless at your word. Nevertheless at your word.

We have toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word, I will let down the night. And as believers in Christ, we must never be tired of doing for the Lord.

[12 : 43] Whether that's speaking a word in season to our neighbour, to our colleagues, speaking of Christ, speaking up for Christ, making a stand on his side.

And that's the example set before us here by these disciples. Nevertheless, at your word, we will let out the nets.

At the word of Christ, they will hope to catch something. And how discouraged we can get when we see little fruit, little reward for the work of God in our midst.

But yet we must continue unwarily letting down the net of the gospel, that the Lord will enclose his own. If we're at Peter and we can say at thy word, we will let down the nets.

If we seek above everything else in this life, to be faithful to Christ, to be faithful to his commission and his command, then we will go on in obedience, letting down the net.

[14:00] You know, it's a simple statement there from Peter, at thy word. But it speaks of a great principle in the Christian life, at thy word.

It's that principle of obedience to God's word. The one who spoke creation into being. For it was by the word of the Lord that the heavens were made.

At thy word. At the word of God, Noah built that great ark to the saving of his family and the preservation of the world.

And Noah could say, I have built this vessel at thy word. At thy word, Abraham leaves out of the colonies.

At thy word, he is prepared to sacrifice his son, to sacrifice Isaac. Moses could say, at thy word, I led the children of Israel out of Egypt, out of bondage.

[15:13] At the word of God, he led them through the Red Sea as though they were crossing dry land. And here is Peter. And his act of obedience here is no less sublime.

At thy word, we will let out the nets. Here he goes to let out his nets as an act of faith. And friends, this is the rule.

The rule for every Christian for the whole of life. At thy word, at the word of God. This is how we make decisions in life.

We look to what God says, and we follow his commands. And notice, friends, secondly, the result of following Christ's word.

we observe one of his early miracles. Verse 6. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets began to break.

[16:23] They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they filled both boats so that they both began to sink. These fishermen had never experienced a catch like this before, such a catch that their nets began to break.

And Christ is showing them clearly who he is. He is the one who has dominion over the fish of the sea. He has dominion over dry land.

he shows them clearly here that he is the one that has dominion over the wealth of the sea. As clearly as he showed them at another time that he had dominion and power over the waves of the sea.

Remember when Christ was in the boat and they were caught in a storm. How he said to the waves peace be still.

And the waves which had raged before then quiet were and still. He demonstrates who he is, that he is God. The multitude of fishes which they had caught here was so great that they couldn't take their nets to shore.

[17:54] And they called their other ship and they filled them both so they began to sink. And he is clearly confirming not only to the disciples who are with him but to the great crowds that are standing by the shore.

He is confirming to them that the doctrine that he preaches is the truth and he's confirming that by this great miracle, by this great catch of fish.

he's confirming that he is preaching to them the message of God. And no doubt that crowd of people were still standing there by the shore side to see what was going to happen.

What was he going to do next? And this would confirm their belief that he was indeed sent from God. Peter is repaid for the use of his boat.

You see the Lord repays his people for their service. His repayment is abundant and super abundant. Christ is clearly here giving encouragement to the disciples.

[19:18] He gives encouragement to those who go out to preach the gospel. that it is his work and that the results are the results of his work.

They know that their labours are not in vain in the Lord, that his word will not return unto him void. The fishermen here are astonished.

They have spent their lives here fishing in this lake. And they have never seen such a large draft of fishes taken out of this lake before.

Notice Peter's response in verse 8. But when Simon Peter saw it he fell down at Jesus' knees saying depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord.

notice Peter's humility. He sees how unworthy he is. How can he as sinner be associated with Christ the Son of God?

[20 : 31] God. He senses his own unworthiness to have any part in this work. And the language here speaks of Peter's self-denial of his humility.

Why are you the Son of God befriending me? A sinner, a sinful man. Depart from me.

Maybe you're like that yourself tonight. Maybe you think that Christ came into this world to save better people than you. Maybe you think that you're not worthy to be a believer in Christ.

Friend, nothing could be further from the truth. Christ came into this world to save sinners. His gospel is to all men everywhere.

Surely that includes you. This is the one who didn't come to call the righteous. He's the one who came to call sinners to repentance.

[21 : 50] And here is Peter in his boat. And he's got the Son of God, the Messiah, in his boat with him. And he feels his unworthiness that of all people he should select him to be his disciple.

Peter has a realisation of the sinfulness of his heart. He sees his sin. He sees his own unworthiness.

He has a realisation of how awful the gravity of his sin, the defilement of his sin, the offence of it. And he falls down at Christ's knees, confessing his sin.

Now every one of us has this sin in our lives. We have our original sin, passed down from Adam. And we add transgressions to that sin in thought, word, and deed every day of life.

we were born in sin, shaped in iniquity. And we transgressed the law of God every day. But Peter comes to our realisation of his own sinfulness when he sees what he sees in Christ, the holiness and the fellowship of God.

[23 : 26] And friends, maybe it's like that for ourselves when we have an awareness of the presence of God. It is then that we see the sinfulness and we feel the sinfulness of our own hearts.

But friend, when you come to realise that you're a sinner, when you feel your own sin, we don't pray, depart from me, O Lord. We pray to the Lord to come in and to save us from our sins.

We pray that he would come and have mercy on our souls, that he would save us, that he would cleanse us. Realising that without our sin being dealt with in Christ, that we will be left to suffer the consequence of our sin throughout eternity.

And we call on the blessed Saviour to come into our lives and to save us from our sin. And he is the Christ who doesn't say depart from me.

He's the one who says, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He's the one who says, come, that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly.

[24 : 48] He's the one who's given the great commission to the church. Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, commending men to come to Christ, that they might be saved and have life.

We must all come to find this Christ while there is time. While there is time. Time, friends, is short. Our lives are passing by.

The Bible says the life of man is like a vapour. It appears for a little time and vanishes away. Our days pass, the word of God says, swifter than the weaver should.

And soon it will be time for us to take our leave of this world and all that we hold dear. Friend, have you dealt with your sin?

Have you found this Christ that Peter found to be your Christ, to deal with your sin? Do you feel like Peter that I am a sinful man, O Lord?

[25 : 59] Or are you like the rich farmer? Do you know that the word of God is true and that all these things are true? But you are going to put this off for a more convenient time.

Remember the rich young farmer, how he promised himself many days. And he said, I will build myself bigger barns.

And he put off the things of his soul. And how God said of that young man, thou fool, this day, thy soul shall be required of thee, and then who shall all these things be?

Friends, seeing that we're not building up treasures in this world, everything we have in this life and in this world we'll be leaving behind shortly. But that will tighten our grip on eternal things, on the things of God, and that we'll hold the things of this life very loosely.

You see, God cannot accept sin. God is holy, and he cannot have sin in his presence. Sin is contrary to what God is, it's contrary to his character, contrary to his being.

[27 : 27] And this is our affliction, it's our disease. The greatest loss that man experienced when he fell in the Garden of Eden was that he lost communion with God because of his sin.

But he promises to deal with our sin in this life, to deal with it now. Remember when the angels fell in heaven, they were banished from the presence of God.

When man fell in the Garden of Eden, he was banished from paradise. God cannot tolerate sin, and if we leave this world with no sins, then we'll be banished from God's presence for all eternity.

Christ will say to those who are outside of Christ, who didn't accept his gospel invitation, who didn't accept the free and full invitations to come to him for life, on that last and final day, on the morning of the resurrection, he'll say to them that never came to him, depart from me, I never knew you.

Peter says depart from me, but Christ does not depart from him. Oh, friend, whatever you do in this life, don't put off dealing with the needs of your eternal soul.

[29 : 08] Peter wasn't fit company for Christ in his own estimation, but it was Peter that the Lord chose. it was Peter that he chose for his neighbours.

And so it is for us today. You might feel the gospel is for other people. It was meant for others.

Friend, the gospel was meant for all men everywhere, that we would come to God and experience the peace of God.

Christ goes to those whose society has written off. And here he is with these fishermen, with Simon. And so were also there James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. and Jesus says to them, fear not, from now on you will be catching men.

Christ intimates here to Peter, that he will see far greater things, than he has seen that day.

[30 : 25] He is to make him a fisher of men. Peter, who will become an apostle. And he informs James and John, that it will be far more astonishing for him, when he will be sent out to preach the gospel, than it was when he was sent out to lay down his nets for a draft.

I'm sure Peter thought back to this on that great day at Pentecost, when Peter was preaching and thousands were brought into the kingdom.

Thousands redeemed, thousands were saved. Fear not, the Lord says. How often does the Lord say that to us?

Fear not, fear not, little flock. And friends, surely as believers, we ought to go through this life with little fear.

He's always saying, fear not, fear not. We know that God is reigning sovereignly over all things, that our God reigns and he has ordered all things.

[31 : 50] And though it's hard for us at times to accept what he has in his plan for us, we know that God doeth all things well. these men would never have thought that their calling was going to take them away from fishing at the lake at Gennesaret.

They would have expected to spend their lives there as fishermen. But these were the men that the Lord chose to turn the world upside down by preaching his gospel.

men. They weren't considered highly by their society. They were ordinary men. They weren't powerful men politically.

They were lowly men. They were fishermen. And these were the men that Christ chose to go out in his name to catch men.

You see, God often uses unlikely candidates for his work. many years ago in our island, there was a man called Angus of the Hills.

[33 : 09] He was from the 19th century. And Angus was a very simple man. man. And when he went applied for church membership, he was refused because the elders felt that he was too simple to understand what it meant to be a member of Christ's church.

But Angus carried on in the Christian life undeterred. And wherever the Lord's people were gathered, Angus of the Hills was there.

And he became noted as a spiritual and godly man. He was used by the Lord. At one communion in Lox, there were three applicants for church membership.

The minister was the reverend Robert Finlayson. And he asked them all as they came in, what was it that made you seek the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour?

The first woman that came in said it was hearing the prayer of an Islamian. And the second person came in and she said it was hearing the prayer of an Islamian that made me realize my need of Christ.

[34 : 33] The third woman had been affected by the preaching of the minister. And the saintly Robert Finlayson was recorded to have said that of the three converts in his congregation, two of them were the converts of Anisna Miao.

God uses unlikely candidates to do his work. He is no respecter of persons. Verse 11, we read, when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Christ.

When they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him. Despite having the best catch of their career, prospering and their fishing this day, they found something that was of far more value and they forsook all to follow Christ.

Reminds us of the woman at the well of Samaria. Remember she went to the well to draw water and there at the well she made the Lord and he spoke to her and remember her response.

We're told she left her water pot behind and she ran into the town and she called out come and see a man that told me all things that ever I did.

[36 : 16] Is not this the Christ? Friends, it would do us well to forsake everything else and to seek Christ for our souls. What were their boats?

What were their jobs? in comparison to what they found. They found Christ, the salvation of their souls.

They found the one who was to be their everything and they left everything to follow Christ. Our friend, don't let anything of this world keep you from seeking the Lord.

Don't let anything discourage you. These men left their calling to serve Christ. And we know that after the crucifixion of Christ they went back to their boats for a short time and then the Lord reappeared to them and sent them out to bay, fishers of men, preachers of his gospel.

After Pentecost they finally abandoned their boats for good and they spent their lives preaching God's redeeming grace.

[37 : 34] You know all these men in this chapter we read there of the disciples, the fishermen meeting Christ. We read of the leper, of the paralytic.

None of them left Christ as they found him. every one of them experienced a change in their lives. The leper was cleansed.

The paralytic was told to take up his bed and walk. The fishermen were called into a new sphere of labour and the people of that town are recorded as saying, we have seen strange things this day. they had seen the hand of God at work in the lives of the people in their villages and their towns. God's transforming grace at work and they marvelled. Now had Peter followed his own reasoning, he would never have launched out to cast out his names.

[38 : 48] but we notice the fruit here of faith and obedience, the fruit of doing God's will, the fruit of faithfulness.

And so friends, we as believers in Christ must communicate this gospel to a dying world. Here is one who can satisfy the needs of our lives and of our soul.

and we ought to go out with this message to our neighbours, to our families, though they think us fools. The gospel is to the Jew a stumbling block, to the Greeks it is foolishness, but to those of us who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation.

May God grant that it be so for each and every one of us. Let us pray. gracious and most blessed one, we praise thee this night for the work of thy Son, that he came into this world to redeem a people to himself, and that he uses sinful men to carry out that great work of bringing sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask, O Lord, that thou wouldst remember each and every one of us this night, that thou wouldst reveal thyself to us, accept our worship, and watch over us and cleanse us from sin.

[40 : 30] For Christ's sake, Amen. We'll bring our service now to a close in Psalm 145, Psalm 145, from the beginning of the psalm.

I'll thee extol my God, O King, I'll bless thy name always.

Thee will I bless each day, and will thy name forever praise. Great is the Lord, much to be praised, his greatness such exceeds, grace unto rest shall praise thy works, and show thy mighty deance. I of thy glorious majesty the honour will record, I'll speak of all thy mighty works, which wondrous are, O Lord. Men of thine acts the might shall show, thine acts that dreadful are, and I thy glory to advance, thy greatness will declare.

The memory of thy goodness great they largely shall express, with songs of praise they shall extol, thy perfect righteousness. The Lord is very gracious, in him compassion flow, in mercy he is very great, and is to anger slow.

[41 : 57] We'll sing these verses to God's praise. praise. I'll thee extol my God, O King, I'll bless thy name always. grace the Wat the Ex Jahre kissed her ku en aud mad fi ki In sheath above I will forever pray cross the Lord I will not surely pray His grace never yetzee

Praise the Lord, the grace of praise, the Lord, and show thy mighty peace.

I hold thy glorious majesty in our every heart.

And see the Lord, thy mighty word, which one breath shall know, Lord.

Men, O thy hands, the one I shall show, thy hands and air to the heart.

[44 : 06] And I, thy glory, true love, thy pages will be made.

The memory, O thy good has been, in our hearts we shall express.

With songs of praise, we shall bless you. Thy perfect life has been.

The Lord is very sure. In compassion's glory, in mercy is very great.

And is to love my soul. Lord, we ask that thou wouldst accept our worship.

[45 : 35] That thou wouldst go before us now as the breaker up of our way. That thou wouldst lead us all to Christ. Accept our worship and forgive us for all our shortcomings. For we ask all in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.