
Gathering the community - Evangelism

Luke 5:1-11

Big Idea: Jesus seeks and saves the lost through His people who follow Him at any cost.

Introduction

“Aboard a United States submarine in enemy waters of the Pacific, a sailor was stricken with acute appendicitis. The nearest surgeon was thousands of miles away. Pharmacist mate Wheller Lipes watched the seaman’s temperature rise to 106 degrees. His only hope was an operation. Said Lipes: ‘I have watched doctors do it. I think I could. What do you say?’ The sailor consented. In the wardroom the patient was stretched out on a table beneath a floodlight. The mate and assisting officers, dressed in reversed pajama tops, masked their faces with gauze. The cook boiled water for sterilizing. The tea strainer served as an antiseptic cone. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. Bent tablespoons served to keep the muscles open. After cutting through the layers of muscles, the mate took twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two hours and a half later, the last stitch was sewed just as the last drop of ether gave out. Thirteen days later the patient was back at work” (This analogy was written by Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse)

Pondering this story by Dr. Barnhouse moves me in the direction of one of Christ’s staggering promises. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father” (Jn.14:12). For Christ, perfect God in flesh, to work directly on a lost soul to quicken and bring out of death and into life is great (Lk.5:20) – but for Him to do the same through us is a greater work (Acts 2:41).

This is what we will explore tonight. We are all Wheller Lipes. We all see people dying of the severe case of sin. We know what they need. They are right in front of us. We aren’t professionals. We sense our inadequacies. Yet, we also know of God’s providence, purpose and promises. He has us in relationships for redemptive reasons.

Tonight I want to try to contribute to the series on *Community* by preaching on evangelism. The message for tonight taken from Luke 5:1-11 can be summarized like this.

Jesus seeks and saves the lost

through His people who follow Him at any cost.

(Unpack the big idea to lead into how the passage functions).

But the question for God’s people is: “Do we follow Him at any cost”? Yes, we can see from Luke 19:10 that Jesus seeks and saves the lost. Yes, we believe Him to be authoritative and sovereign in and over evangelism. And yes, we understand that God uses people to reach people. But the speed

bump in the summary sentence is found in the qualifier. Jesus effectively evangelizes the lost through His people *who follow Him at any cost*. It is on this clause; this stipulation that we will focus on tonight. The key to a surge in evangelism at Clearcreek Chapel is found precisely in this condition – *who follow Him at any cost*.

If the first question is “do we follow him at any cost”? and the answer is NO then the second question is “how can we follow him at any cost”? This question centers on the topic of the passage for tonight; Lk.5:1-11. Let’s open our Bibles to Luke 5:1-11 and notice how Jesus continues to seek and save the lost. He does it by causing his people to follow Him at any cost. Let’s notice how he does this as we listen to the passage read <read & pray>.

Chapter five is not about Jesus preaching to the crowd (that was last chapter). This chapter is about Jesus calling His first disciples. But more specifically, this scene (1-11) is about how Jesus builds His people into an evangelistic community (notice v.10 and the phrase “from now on you will be catching men”). This story is how Jesus caused his disciples to freely follow him. And the net result of this is a world’s record catch.

To see a surge of evangelism at Clearcreek Chapel we mustn’t fear following him away from the familiar. We must let go of all that holds us back from following Jesus as Supreme. We must be convinced that everything we have is at Jesus’ disposal for his purposes. We must be clear that his purposes are centered on the church; his body – growing in maturity and growing in numbers. We must believe Jesus when he said “whoever does not gather with Me scatters (Lk.11:23). There is no such thing as on the fence following. The key to evangelism is what we are concentrating on tonight. That key is not found in programs and techniques and materials and events. The channel through which the gospel will surge into the lives of the lost is people who follow Jesus at any cost.

Herein lies the problem for us doesn’t it? How many of us can say that “I am a person who follows him at any cost”? “I have a single passion. All my responsibilities and relationships and riches and recreations are aimed at joining him in what he came to do”? I know I can’t say that tonight. The need of the hour is to be caught afresh by Jesus so that we can catch others for Jesus. The rest of our time tonight will be spent watching how Jesus catches fishermen and makes them into fishers of men.

To cause His people to follow Him at any cost first we see the problem.

The Problem

v.1-2

Luke is chronicling Jesus’ life for a man named Theophilus. He wants this “lover of God” to have certainty concerning the things he was taught (1:1-4). This tells us that the basic purpose of Luke/Acts is the edification of believers. Luke by the Holy Spirit desires to see followers of Jesus increase in faith or “certainty concerning the things taught”. As we come upon 5:1-11, we find something surprising. The surprise is seen as we notice the setting to the story found in v.1-2.

Jesus was sent to preach the good news of the kingdom of God (4:43). We see him in v.1 carrying out this purpose. Nothing shocking so far. Yet, notice the characters and what they are doing in the scene. We see the crowd and we see the disciples. The crowd is pressing in on Jesus. The amazing thing about this scene is not so much who is close to the Lord but rather who is distant from the Lord. The disciples are in the distance washing their nets. The writer Luke wants his readers to sense a problem. Why would the curious crowd be “pressing in” while the committed core had “gone out”? It seems as though it should be just the opposite.

Luke flags this concern by contrasting the two groups as seen in v.2 using the word “but”. He is signaling to the reader that something is wrong.

Attending not to Christ’s word

Why do we have the crowd pressing in on Jesus to hear the word while we see the disciples off in the distance? Peter, Andrew, James and John were not unaccustomed to Jesus and His mission. This calling scene is not their first call to follow Jesus. In John 1 we see the first call to follow him. Some commentators have Luke 5 approximately one year after the initial calling of the disciples. Whether it is a year or not, the point is that the disciples are aware of Jesus’ call, character and purpose.

Also, notice a few verses earlier. Jesus in 4:38 entered Peter’s house. And in the house Jesus healed his mother-in-law. Undoubtedly, there was much celebration over Jesus that night. Why do we see Peter and others not attending Christ’s word as the crowd was?

Attending to their work

Secondly, not only do we sense a problem with the disciples because they are not attending to Christ’s teaching but also we see this problem by noticing what they are attending. V.2 says that they were washing their nets. So what? They were fishermen. Their trade was fishing. They had just finished fishing. They were busy. What’s wrong with that?

Luke I believe gives us these details to hint at a conflict brewing. I think this because of the way the story ends. Something happened in this episode to cause them to leave boats, nets, fish; EVERYTHING in order to follow Jesus. Could it be that detailing what the disciples are doing while Jesus is preaching points to a problem?

Also, we know we are moving in the right direction with this interpretation when we read the last part of John’s gospel. The epilogue in the gospel of John is quite similar to the Luke 5 scene. In that scene the disciples are attending to their work in a way that suggests a problem. Jesus addresses the problem when He looked at Peter and said, “Do you love me more than these?” And then He said, “follow me”.

The combination of these observations tells me that Luke wants us to discern that there is a problem with the disciples. We should be suspicious that something is not right. In a calling

story concluded by “they left everything and followed him” we can reasonably conclude that 1) Attending not to Jesus’ words and 2) attending to their work was a problem.

What about you?

Are you becoming suspicious that you too have a problem that keeps you back from evangelism? Have you taken inventory over your interests lately? What are you preoccupied with? What do you regularly concentrate on? When there is nothing to distract you, what do you think about? What topic or concern do you attend with interest? In the month of August, did you attend to the Bible in reading, and reflecting? What do you steadily pray for? Do you desire to press in on Jesus and listen to His word through the Chapel’s pulpit ministry? Or do the “concerns of this world” chock the Word in your life? Do you obsess over growing your business or your flowers or your children or your bank account? What, in other words, do you find interesting in this world – His word or your work?

For us to enjoy a surge in evangelism at CC, we must start here. We must recognize that Jesus seeks and saves the lost through his people who follow him at any cost. To be this type of people we must first pay attention to what has our attention. Is it Jesus or other stuff?

Now as we read on in this passage we find that this problem is not the main problem. To see the solution to our problem in evangelism we need to investigate more.

The deeper problem & its solution

v.3-11

To get his disciples close to him who were at a distance attending to business notice his involvement with Peter. After Jesus had finished speaking and Peter had finished fishing much occurred. Jesus shifts his talk from the crowd to Peter. Peter is tired and done. Jesus has only just begun. Jesus’ is about to expose the deeper problem. Listen.

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. 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. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Jesus commands Peter to fish again and in a certain place. Peter was reluctant and somewhat skeptical. Remember, Peter was the expert in fishing. Jesus wasn’t. He was a carpenter. Peter knew that fish were caught in shallow waters; not the deep. He knew that night fishing was more effective than daytime fishing. Peter hesitates but moves forward. Faltering faith (but faith nonetheless) caused him to say “but at your Word I will”.

The next thing we observe is Peter and company bringing into their boats a world’s record catch. And Peter was floored. His first response was not happy. It was helpless. He did not

dance initially. He was down immediately. We can understand his response by looking at v.8. “When he saw it (referring to the miracle catch) he fell to the feet of Jesus. The power and authority of Master Jesus overwhelmed him. He trembled at the sight of Jesus’ authority. He saw a glimpse of Christ’s supremacy. He quickly sensed the infinite gap between him (sinful) and Jesus (Supreme).

A heart not gripped by glory

What was Peter’s deeper problem? Initially, he was just somewhat distant. He just wasn’t paying close attention to Jesus. He was involved in the familiar. He was just going about his business. But the reason for this distance and disinterest is plain. His heart was not gripped by glory. Jesus was not big in the eyes of Peter. Big boats and big business were big. Jesus wasn’t. But Christ exposed Peter’s heart. As Peter stepped out in faith, Jesus revealed His greatness. And this was devastating. Beloved, before we freely follow him we must fearfully fall before him.

Christ’s majesty not seen

Until then, worldly activities are full-size and God is pint-size. In this condition little to no evangelism occurs. We will not be impressed with Christ. We will be impressed with our little makings. When we talk with others about Christ they will not sense that we sense Christ is Supreme. They may hear the Christian talk. But they will not see the Christ of our talk. The reason for this is clear. When we are in this state, our hearts are not gripped by Christ’s majesty. The splendor and magnificence of King Jesus might be our formal theology but it is not our functioning doxology.

To cause his people to follow him at any cost and thus making them into fishers of men, Jesus penetrates the deeper problem. He exposes their sin and discloses His supremacy. This is true but only ½ true. Notice the second part of how Jesus causes his people to follow him at any cost.

Christ’s mercy not sensed

Looking at pitiful Peter, Jesus relieved him by saying “Do not be afraid...”. This phrase is equivalent to “you are forgiven”. Peter was utterly broken over his sin. Humbled by Jesus, Peter heard words of hope from Jesus. There was a demonstration of desperation for Jesus. The need in Peter’s life is a need in all our lives. We must be gripped by not only Christ’s majesty but also His mercy. To see the mingling of the Lion and the Lamb in the One person Jesus Christ was the solution to Peter’s problem. To sense Christ’s absolute authority over all reality, to become convicted over personal sin and yet to hear his words “don’t be afraid” was the solution to Peter’s deeper problem.

A heart gripped by glory

Now Peter is gripped by Christ’s glory – his majesty and mercy.

Falling down due to seeing Christ's majesty

This is the balance we need as we move out in evangelism. Humbled by our sin and yet hopeful by our Savior we move out in an obedient way. We grow in evangelism by falling down at Jesus' feet. When we see miracles through ministry, we never take credit. We, instead, fall down at Jesus' feet. We become aware of our own need for Jesus. We go to the Cross again (and again) for fresh sights of justification by faith alone and forgiveness of all our sins. We know that the power of Christ and the love of Christ make our faith in Christ unshakable.

Getting up due to sensing Christ's mercy

We are ready to get up and follow him at any cost. We believe the words "from now on you will be catching men". How does the story end? V.11 tells us. With the wealth of fish at their feet they depart cherishing Jesus. Turning from something in order to turn toward something demonstrates what we treasure. The Bible says, "they left everything and followed him". This is a sure sign of people who are awestruck over Jesus' majesty and mercy. And this is a primary characteristic of followers of Jesus through whom Jesus wins the lost.

Stack up houses and families and finances and lands and health; all earthly treasures and measure them against the infinite and breathtaking glory of Jesus Christ and what do we see? Beloved, cherish Jesus above all earthly joys and notice how Clearcreek Chapel will change.

Conclusion How can we take this message to heart? How can this passage map over our concern for evangelism at the Chapel?

- 1st Remember the principle
 - Jesus seeks and saves the lost through his people who follow him at any cost.
 - Read often Matt.28:18-20; Rom.15:18; 1Cor.3:5; Jn.17:20
 - Reflect on the staggering truth that we are instruments in His hand.
- 2nd Recall the real problem
 - We do not tend to follow Him at any cost.
 - We tend to our business and not his business.
 - Journal your interests. Notice your preoccupations.
 - Our hearts are not gripped by his majesty and mercy.
- 3rd Relish the real solution
 - Our hearts generally are exposed as we involve ourselves in ministry.

- By faith share the Faith in word and deed (cf. Rom.15:18)
 - Word ministries – Literature Booth, Little Blue Card, Canvassing for Christ, Caring for the Christless, All Church Outreach Events.
 - Deed ministries – The Elders are praying over and pondering a ministry that would provide an outward focus for Clearcreek Chapel that would assist to find and help unbelievers with the gospel. Every member of the Chapel can serve in this ministry. Teaming up to discover a community living close to the Chapel who resembles Lk.14:12-24 = drunkards, addicts, mentally disturbed, physically disabled, migrant workers, S.S. dependants, unwed parents, unemployed, illiterate, paycheck to paycheck blue-collar workers and so forth. Through caring of needs and counseling the Word we can demonstrate mercy while declaring the truth in order to see Jesus working through us. Get involved as opportunities arise!
- Discern heart sins. Be distressed over your sins. Be disciplined by your Savior
Discover grace-producing hope
- Our eyes of faith can open to see his majesty and mercy afresh.
 - This is relishing the real solution – Jesus Christ the LORD.
- 4th Renew participation in following Him at any cost.