
Catching Men

Luke 5:1-11

Introduction

Imagine with me Luke 5:1-11. (Read).

My aim tonight is to preach and pray in such a way that a new fruitfulness in evangelism will be seen at the Chapel. As a Church, I'm delighted to say that we've been growing in our understanding of the Bible. We have been growing in the way we think about ministry. We have been growing in clarity and conviction in children's and youth ministries. We have been growing in our care for the burdened. We have been growing in giving of finances. We have been growing in our vision of missions. We have been growing in our counseling service. We have been growing in the way we do personal ministry at Flock level. We have been growing in membership. Beloved, we are growing.

But strangely we have not been growing in more people *turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God...* (Acts 26:18) by means of God's Word through God's people (Acts 14:1). And it is my counsel that we need to awaken to this fact. We need to notice where we need change. And we need to start growing in evangelism. Tonight I set out to preach and pray in such a way that this will happen. That a fresh fruitfulness in evangelism will be enjoyed here at the Chapel is my desire.

To do this I have chosen Luke 5:1-11. In this scene we will listen to and watch Jesus make a point that we all must believe. To the degree that we believe this point, we will grow in witness and love for the lost. And to the degree we doubt this point, we will slow up and eventually stop in our efforts to see people convert to Christ.

Now Jesus makes his point by way of showing us something about how he means for us to catch unbelievers and gather them into the faith. What is his point & how does it apply to us is what this message is about.

The Principle

It seems that Jesus' message and miracle point to a parable of sorts. Embedded in this miracle we notice an overpowering and empowering principle. Reduced to one sentence this story is saying *by Jesus multitudes will come to saving faith by followers of Jesus*. Let me repeat it. By Jesus multitudes will come to saving faith by followers of Jesus. This measured sentence might just yield measureless harvest if we will simply believe it. So, for us to believe cogently we must see clearly this principle. To notice His point in an obedient way let's break it down into its three primary phrases.

The Parts of the Principle

By Jesus

The first part of this principle is the phrase "by Jesus". Luke is drawing our attention to Jesus Christ. Amid all the people and the boats and the fish and the thrills stands Jesus Christ. He is the One highlighted.

All power and authority

We see this in vv.1-3. People pressing in on him to hear from him demonstrate the centrality of Christ. We notice Him commanding Peter and Peter following the command in v.4. We see in v.5 how Peter views Jesus calling him Master. We pick up a theme from Luke seen in 4:32 & 36 that Jesus has authority and power. Finally, we are taken in by an astounding miracle. Where did all these fish come from? The answer: Jesus commanded a large number of fish to get into the net and stay. Every fish which Jesus told to get into the net obeyed! Not one of them veered off and got away.

What is all this about? What are these details underscoring? Jesus rules. He reigns. All power and authority has been given to Him (cf. Matt.28:18). Christ is glorious and man trembles when he sees this.

For us to grow in our evangelistic efforts we must start with the authority and power of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is frightening when we start with us. Evangelism is freeing when we start with Jesus. Notice how Luke portrays Jesus just in chapter five alone.

- Jesus cleanses a leper in 5:13. "And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying "I will; be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him".

- Jesus heals a paralytic in 5:24. “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins he said to the man who was paralyzed ‘I say to you rise, pick up your bed and go home’. And immediately he rose up...”
- Jesus calls Levi in 5:27. “...He said to him, ‘Follow me’. And leaving everything, [Levi] rose and followed him.

Is it not clear from this chapter that Luke is making his case that Jesus is supreme? Is it not significant in light of our topic for tonight that Jesus has all authority and power? Is this not gospel logic that we see in the great commission? “All power and authority has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples...”

O beloved much of our resistance to and fear in evangelism weakens simply by believing that Jesus Christ has all authority and power.

The point Jesus makes in our passage for tonight starts with himself. He is the point. He is the power. Jesus Christ has all authority.

His point develops as we notice the next phrase.

Multitudes will come to saving faith

The second part of this principle is the phrase “multitudes will come to saving faith”.

Try to picture with me what actually happened on this occasion. The disciples fished all night. They caught nothing. They were washing their nets and calling it quits. Then Jesus tells Peter to put out into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. What we see next is remarkable. “When they had done this they enclosed a large number of fish”. This was such a large number of fish that Luke details what happened to their nets and boats. They were breaking and sinking! When Jesus makes clear the meaning of the miracle in v.10 he makes clear the extent of evangelism. When he said to Peter, “from now on you will be catching men” he meant not only successful evangelism (i.e. “you will be”). He also meant exceeding evangelism. This is borne out by noticing the beginning influences of this promise seen in the book of Acts.

- The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (2:47)
- The disciples were increasing in number (6:1)
- The word of God continued to increase and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly (6:7)

- The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord (11:21)
- The word of God increased and multiplied (12:24)
- The churches...increased in number daily (16:5)
- All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord (19:10)
- The word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily (19:20)

Would you agree with me that John Calvin knew his Bible? Calvin knew his Bible as a great missionary book in a way that few moderns do. For him it was largely a book of promises centering on Christ's conquest of the nations through the gospel. Commenting on Isaiah 2:3 he says that men out of "all nations will be conquered by the doctrines of the gospel and stream to Christ".

Somewhere between Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Edwards, Whitefield, Davies, Alexander, Spurgeon and Loyd-Jones – somewhere between them and us confidence dropped in the promise and power of the gospel. We no longer hear King Jesus say to us what he said to Paul, "Do not be afraid but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I have many in this city who are my people". Many of God's elect not yet born again needing to hear the gospel in Corinth? Yes! And also many of God's elect not yet born from above needing to hear afresh the gospel in Springboro, Mason, Dayton, Middletown, Franklin, Germantown, Waynesville, Kettering, Beavercreek, Centerville, Miamisburg, Xenia, Spring Valley, Monroe, Bellbrook, Lebanon, Hamilton.

This parable in Lk.5 is for the church down through the ages. This passage is for us. We must hear with hope the words "multitudes will come to saving faith". We mustn't succumb to a "remnant theology" that says the Church must be tiny if it is to be true. We need to recapture the passion and perspective of C.H. Spurgeon who said, "I myself believe that King Jesus will reign, and the idols be utterly abolished but I expect the same power which turned the world upside down once will still continue to do it".

Is King Jesus speaking to Clearcreek Chapel about our boats and nets? Does he want them to begin sinking and breaking under the weight of gospel-producing growth? Oh, let's dream together. Let's pray together. Let's pursue his promise together.

Up to this point we've seen through Jesus' miracle a parable of sorts. This principle we are noticing spotlights Jesus Christ as possessing all authority and all power. From this authority, we heard that his sights are set high. His commanding voice *turning people from darkness to*

light and from the power of Satan to God... (Acts 26:18) extends to multitudes. His work on the cross guaranteed the promise to Abraham that “I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore...” (Gen.22:17). God said “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”. His efficacious grace will cause fish to jump into the boat.

Now we come to the end of the principle and the completion of this message. Here we look at the third and final phrase to Jesus’ principle.

By followers of Jesus

The third and final part to this principle is the phrase “by followers of Jesus.

By Jesus multitudes will come to saving faith by followers of Jesus.

The last phrase emphasizes how Jesus accomplishes what He sets out to do. Here in this phrase we look at the means by which Jesus fulfills His word. “By followers of Jesus” Jesus saves His people. That is the weight of this phrase.

I desire to rally us to fresh fruitfulness in evangelism by noticing the characteristics of “followers of Jesus”. If the point of the miracle in Luke 5 includes followers of Jesus then I want to know what a follower of Jesus looks like. The marks of a follower of Jesus through whom Jesus saves His people are as follows.

Speaking Jesus

We notice this by observing what the crowds desired from Jesus and how he responded to the crowd. “the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God...[Jesus] sat down and taught the people [the word of God] (vv.1-3). Jesus is modeling for His followers how to bring people into submission to Himself. He spoke the word of God. Truth; not technique is the bait for the fish. If we are to see new fruitfulness in evangelism we must keep speaking the truth in love. There are vast contexts in which the Word can be clearly taught (as illustrated in our text for tonight = shoreline and boat). But what Luke wants the church to understand is that the word of God will cause the crowd to press in on Jesus.

So we see that Jesus will bring to Himself multitudes through His followers who speak the Word.

Obeying Jesus

Another characteristic of a follower through whom Jesus evangelizes is seen in vv.4-5. “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 as your word I will...’”.

Jesus is issuing a call to Clearcreek Chapel to become *Peter-like People!* Look at the type of person on whom Jesus builds his church. Peter is tired. Peter is somewhat skeptical. But Peter said to his Master, “at your word I will”. This is the second characteristic of a follower of Jesus through whom Jesus evangelizes. (S)he *obeys Master Jesus*. Peter illustrates the importance of “not leaning upon our own understanding but in all our ways acknowledging Him” (Pr.3:5,6). Peter was the expert in fishing. He knew that fish were caught in shallow waters; not the deep. He knew that night fishing was more effective than daytime fishing. He was tired and thought that his bed was better than another round of fishing. BUT he died to self. He listened to Jesus. He obeyed...not without struggle. Not perfectly. But he did obey. And when he did...boats began to sink and nets began to break!

The third characteristic we come across of a follower of Jesus is observed in vv.8-10.

Needing Jesus

Peter and company bring 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 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).

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. 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 and forgiveness. The characteristic of a follower of Jesus is simply Needing Jesus!

The last mark of a follower of Jesus through whom Jesus delights to catch people is found in the last verse of this scene; v.11.

Cherishing Jesus

With the wealth of fish at their feet they depart cherishing Jesus. The Bible says, "they left everything and followed him". This is a sure sign of people who are awestruck over Jesus. 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? We must cherish Jesus above all earthly joys.

Conclusion

Let me wrap up this message by pointing us to Christ.

Beloved in light of Christ's authority...

- Let us grow up in confidence in His power.
- Let us fall down in humility under His splendor.
- Let us well up in love over His glory.

Could it be that as these qualities are ours in an increasing way we will see that *by Jesus multitudes will come to saving faith by followers of Jesus?* (cf. Jn.10:16; 17:20; Rom.15:18)

