

The Call to Discipleship
 Luke 5:1-11
 Tampa Covenant Church
 02 February 2025

Proposition: As faithful disciples, we're called to take Christ at his word and rely on his grace as his kingdom witnesses.

FCF: Misaligned priorities as a disciple of Christ.

RHF: Jesus Christ is the master and Lord who forms us into a community of disciples through his person and work.

(#1) Introduction:

We're continuing our study in Luke's gospel and we've entitled the series, "*Stories of our Savior.*" Today's text grants us an opportunity to reflect on how Jesus calls ordinary people to discipleship and mission. We'll see there was nothing extraordinary about Peter and his fishing partners. These men were eeking out a living on the sea but Jesus showed up and entered into their normal, mundane lives and everything changed. When I was a teenager, I was fond of saying, "*I'm not ready to commit my life to Christ, I'm gonna wait until I'm a little older and settled then I'll serve him but not right now.*" That's not how discipleship works. As we'll see, answering the call to discipleship has nothing to do with getting oneself ready nor does it depend on one's established time line.

Last week, we sang together, "*Come Ye Sinners Poor and Needy.*" Lou and I reflected on the 4th stanza on Monday morning, **(#2) which says**, "*Come, ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall; if you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all.*" Those lyrics reinforce the point that we cannot transform ourselves in becoming disciples of Christ, rather we need to be transformed by the grace of God. And we remain faithful to the call by being sensitive to Christ's ongoing work of redemption in the world and relying on his grace every step of the way. So, let's look at this story and marvel at the goodness and grace of our Savior, see what it mean't for Peter and his partners and what it means for us.

Peter's Preoccupation with His Profession: (vv.1-3)

(#3) As Lou shared with us last week, Jesus' Galilean ministry is in full swing and eventually he returns to his childhood stomping ground in Nazareth. While there, he entered the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah. The sermon was short and well received, but in due time he said enough to fill the people with rage. So much so, they put hands on him and brought him to the edge of a cliff to throw him over but Luke tells us he passed through their midsts and went away. **(#4) From there**, Jesus goes to Capernaum; once again enters the synagogue and they're astonished at the authority of his teaching and amazed by his healing. And of course, when it's time for him to go, they want him to stay.

Two differing towns and two polar opposite responses to Jesus and it's no different in our day and age. People are good with the teaching and healing Jesus who says the right things and always makes things better. But not so good with the teaching and healing Jesus who uncovers the messiness in the human heart and seems to be short on miracles. It's as if Jesus is the buffet table from which we're free to take what suits our needs while turning up our noses at the rest. But Jesus responds with absolute clarity on the **(#5) nature of his** mission, "*I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.*"

And so, we come (#6) to our text and Luke tells us on this occasion, the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear the Word of God (good news of the gospel). But this time around, Jesus is not in the synagogue (per se), rather he's standing by the lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). As the crowd continues to press, he sees two unoccupied boats on the shore as the fishermen were preoccupying themselves washing their nets. Picture the scene, there's a mob of people clamoring to hear Jesus preach and these fishermen are off to the side taking care of their gear. Obviously, their nets needed cleaning because fishing nets not only caught fish, they also caught trash, weeds and sludge. So, Jesus gets into one of the boats and we're told it's Peter's boat. Jesus still needs a little distance from the crowd, so he asks Peter to put out a little from the shore. And Luke tells us Jesus sat down in the boat and taught¹ the people. As Lou mentioned last week, it was the custom in the synagogues for the preacher to stand and read the Scriptures then sit to preach.²

(#7 Blank) Jesus and Peter have history. Recall in 4:38-39, Jesus left the synagogue, enroute to Peter's house where Peter's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. When he arrived, the people appealed to him on her behalf, so Jesus stood over her and literally rebuked³ the fever; during the course of his ministry, Jesus will rebuke demons, the wind, waves & sea so the fever's no match and she's healed immediately. So, Jesus wasn't some stranger making a request to Peter and it's safe to assume Peter had no issues with his boat being used for ministry purposes; *"No problem Jesus; do your thing; I'll be over here taking care of my nets."* So, here's Jesus, seated in the boat, teaching the crowd and there's Peter off to the side or at a distance, washing his fishing nets in support of his livelihood.

You see, Peter was acquainted with Jesus and in some sense by letting Jesus use his boat, he was somewhat involved in Jesus' mission. But he wasn't bought in; his priorities were clearly misaligned. We can be like that too, right? We're well acquainted with Jesus but at times we find ourselves not bought in. It's about us first then we grant him some space with whatever room is left. And it starts as soon as we open our eyes each new day. For me, it's the to do list, *"gotta do this, gotta do that."* For you it may be something else. For Peter it was, *"gotta clean those nets."* But I'll submit to you, the first order of the day is not what we have to do but what God is doing and how will he use us to accomplish his plan and purposes. Now, I'm not suggesting some legalistic practice of how you commune with God each day; but what I am suggesting is however we do it, we make sure that our priorities do not eclipse his.

Peter's Faith in Christ's Word: (vv.4-5)

(#8) Here in v.4, Jesus is finished teaching but he doesn't leave for the next town because there's some unfinished business he needs to tighten up with Peter. This time around he doesn't ask Peter to put out a little rather he commands him to *"put [his boat] out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*⁴ In saying your nets, the command also applied to Peter's fishing partners. (#9) Peter recognized Jesus' authority in an earthly sense and replied, *"Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!"* All the commentators remark that the best conditions for fishing were at night; not during the day. Peter's not some recreational fisherman, he's an expert in his field. Therefore, he's not trying to fish during this time of the day only to return with weeds, trash and sludge in the nets with no fish. But Jesus is fast tracking Peter's journey to discipleship by encroaching on his area of expertise.

Think about it, Jesus who grew up in the carpentry business is ordering Peter (expert fisherman); to do in “bad conditions” what Peter’s already tried and failed to do in good conditions.⁵ It’s like Lou and me showing up to your workplace or business tomorrow morning and ordering you to do something that makes absolutely no sense in your area of expertise. As much as you love us, you would show us the door. But Peter doesn’t do that does he? No, he goes against everything he knows to be true (#10) about fishing and says to Jesus, “*But at your word I will let down the nets.*” And Peter’s response to Jesus was not based on his knowledge as a fisherman, but on the authority of Jesus’ word.⁶

(#11 Blank) Sisters and brothers, we can speculate however we want concerning Peter’s attitude: He spoke back to Jesus, he anticipated saying “*I told you so*”, his heart wasn’t in the right place? None of that really matters because the “proof is in the pudding”: Peter took Jesus at his word! And for him, as well as for all believers of all time, he acted in faith. See, it’s not enough to refer to ourselves as “persons of faith” when asked what do we believe because that could mean anything. If you’re a Christian, having faith in Christ, means living a life of complete trust and dependency on him alone; especially in times when things don’t seem to make sense. It doesn’t mean that we won’t struggle with whatever it is but when the dust settles, we’re found faithful in taking Jesus at his word. Because he’s the object and the sphere in which our faith operates. It’s in him we live and move and have our being. Without him the only options left on the table are putting faith in our ability to have faith or faith in someone or something else. But when we make it a habit to actively engage with God’s words and promises given to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we consistently renew and bolster our trust in the promises of our Savior.

(#12) We read from Ps. 40 in our meditation text and in v.4, David declares, “*Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!*” And in v.5, you can sense David’s confidence growing in the Lord as he recounts what the LORD has done for his people, “*You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.*” Church, every experience of the LORD’s grace in the past should always lead us to look to him with trust for our present as well as our future.⁷ Skeptics would love to accuse Christians of operating in blind faith and obedience to God but that’s simply not the case. God is not interested in blind faith because it robs him of the glory, he’s due as our creator and sustainer. In other words, he’s proved himself faithful; so we trust in him and take him at his word.

Peter’s Transformation to a Fisher of Men: (vv.6-11)

(#13) In vv.6-7, we see what happened when Peter took Jesus at his word. His partners put the boats into the deep and let down the nets, resulting in the enclosure of a large number of fish. The catch was so large that the nets were breaking so they had to enlist the help of the other partners. After filling the boats with fish, they were so full that they began to sink! What a great problem to have. Those nets were filled with nothing but (#14) profit. Well, we read in v.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.”* The eyes of Peter’s heart are now wide open: He sees the boats sinking as they’re coming ashore and he’s not excited nor is he seeking to make a business deal with Jesus. He’s humbled to the core of his being as he realizes he’s a sinner, unworthy to stand in the presence of that which is holy. Peter understood in his heart that Jesus was

much more than some earthly master. He's Lord (not like "sir") but in the sense of someone divine with power from on high. And Luke tells us James and John the sons of Zebedee were also astonished.

But how does Jesus react? He doesn't use the opportunity to tell them...."I told you so", which he had every right to do. But that's not the way of our Savior. Rather, he draws near to Peter in the helplessness of his (#15) estate and speaks a word of grace to him and gives him an assignment, "*Do not be afraid. From now on, you'll be catching men*"; you'll be fishing for people. In other words, Peter yours is a humbleness of heart that God will use for his glory. And when they brought their boats to land, they (Peter, James and John) left everything and followed Jesus. (#16 Blank) What a wonderful account of how one answers the call to discipleship and mission; again, it's not about getting ourselves ready to serve; if that's the case we'll never serve because we can't ready ourselves for kingdom work. We have to be transformed by the grace of God. And it's only when we realize who we are in light of who Christ is and humble ourselves before his power and presence will we be fit for service. Our Lord doesn't need disciples who think they're doing him a favor in readying themselves for his service.⁸ Rather, he uses those who trust and depend upon the sufficiency of his grace in all things, at all times and in all circumstances.

This text is not calling us to quit our jobs and walk away from everything to follow Christ although that has certainly happened in the lives of many Christians over the years. But it is calling us to think deeply about what it means to follow Christ as a faithful disciple. At the beginning of the story, Peter is preoccupied with his livelihood while Jesus is sitting in HIS boat, teaching the crowd. But after he's transformed by the grace of God everything changed. On the day he miraculously experiences the biggest success of his business career; everything he's ever wanted. But it wasn't enough to keep him from leaving it on the shore in answering the call to serve as a witness of the good news of the kingdom.

It tells us that we who have been transformed by the grace of God must consistently reexamine our priorities in light of our call to follow Christ. And we take inventory through Word, Sacrament and Prayer in allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal the areas in our lives that need to be reprioritized in service to Christ. Because the highest priority in our lives must be found in seeking and doing his will. Where we no longer live primarily to please self; rather we live to please the one who's called us by his grace to serve as his faithful gospel witnesses. And one of the ways we do this is by fully depending on the grace of God in utilizing our gifts and talents in ministering to others. Those outside of the church who know nothing of Christ's saving love, struggling with the faith and skeptical of the faith. And those inside the church who are seeking to grow as faithful disciples; which should be every single one of us. I don't know what this looks like but let's start today and make it a priority at TCC to do life together as a community of disciples, striving together by the grace of God for the furtherance of his kingdom.

Conclusion:

And we do this because the truth of the gospel is life changing and life forming truth. In the gospel we witness the justice of God poured out on Christ in all its fullness, enabling us through faith and repentance to receive the merciful love of God in all of its fullness in Christ. Through his sinless life and sacrificial death, we have been forgiven of our sins. And through his resurrection and ascension, we have been formed into a community and given the utmost privilege to follow him as witnesses of his good news. We

cannot begin to fathom the depths of our Savior's love toward us; it's too high, too deep and too wide; it's an immeasurable love. And it keeps us grounded and secures our trust in him as his beloved. Therefore, with hearts of humble gratitude we make it our corporate prayer this morning and always to entreat our Heavenly Father to grant us the grace we need to serve as heralds and stewards of his gospel. All to the praise of his glory and for his glory alone. And may he bless and keep us toward that end.

¹ The verb rendered “taught” is actually a 3,s, pres, act, imperfect, which denotes continuous action in the past with no assessment of the action’s completion. It could also be rendered, “Jesus was teaching” vice, “Jesus taught.”

² Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 578.

³ ἐπιτιμάω (*epitimaō*). vb. to rebuke. This verb primarily refers to the action of verbally correcting someone or something. It appears in the nt mostly in the Synoptic Gospels. Peter rebukes (*epitimaō*) Jesus for saying that he had to be killed and rise again, and Jesus in turn rebukes (*epitimaō*) Peter (Mark 8:32–33). Jesus rebukes not only people, but also the winds and sea (Matt 8:26), demons (e.g., Matt 17:18; Luke 9:42) and the fever of Simon’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:39).

⁴ ἐπανάγω: to leave the shore so as to get into open water, *go out, put out* to sea. In v.3, the verb, ἐπανάγω is an aor, act, inf, and translated as a request. Here in v.4, the mood of the verb has changed to an imperative (command or request).

⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 154.

⁶ *Ibid*, 154–155.

⁷ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, ed. J. A. Motyer, vol. 1, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 142.

⁸ Bock, Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 5:1–11.