

February 6, 2022
Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 5:1-11 (Isaiah 6:1-8)

TRUSTING THE WORD OF JESUS.

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

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 5th chapter, which you head read earlier.

Perhaps you recognize our Gospel reading this morning as the story when: ***“Jesus Calls the First Disciples”*** or as the of: ***“The Miracle of A Great Catch of Fish.”*** But neither of those summaries capture the main point of our text. The main point is: ***“Trust the Word of Jesus.”*** ***Trust the Word of Jesus***, for it is by the powerful Word of Jesus that disciples are made, and Christ’s Church is established, grows, and is sustained.

While Jesus’ miracles capture our attention, they are not at the heart of His ministry. His miracles are visual evidence that He is the Christ and that He has power and authority over all creation. But at the core of His ministry is His preaching and teaching. As we heard last week, after witnessing His many miracles, the people came to make Jesus their own miracle worker, but Jesus told them:

“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” (Luke 4:43)

It was a divine necessity that Jesus proclaim the Good News message of salvation. It’s the message that God came into the world in the flesh of man to fulfill the Law and the prophets, be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and on the third day rise from the dead – all by which Christ destroyed the works of the devil, redeemed sinners from eternal death in hell, and restored them to new life in Him. (cf: Luke 18:31–33, 24:7; 1 John 3:8)

All who are in Christ have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and are reconciled with the Father. (cf: Ephesians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 5:19) And even though Jesus has ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, He continues to teach us and preach to us, even today.

Just like Simon Peter in our text, you and I would do well to ***trust the Word of Jesus*** above and beyond all other words of human wisdom, and over and against our own reason and experience. It is through God’s preached Word that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with him in the one true faith.

One day a crowd pressed in on Jesus because they wanted to hear His teaching. There were two boats nearby in which fishermen had labored all night long on the lake and caught nothing. So, Jesus gets into Simon Peter's boat, asks him to push off a little from land, and He sits down and teaches the people.

At this point, Peter already knows Jesus. His brother Andrew had introduced them a year or so earlier. (cf: John 1:41–42) And Peter likely had been with Jesus at the wedding at Cana. (cf: John 2:2) And we heard last week that Jesus had come to Peter's house healed his mother-in-law of her fever. (cf: Luke 4:38–39) So, Jesus' teaching and preaching is not new to Peter. He believes in Jesus. In our text, St Luke records:

“⁴ And when [Jesus] had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’” (Luke 5:4)

One thing we know for sure is that Jesus didn't come into this world to teach us how to catch fish. He was a preacher, not a fisherman. Yet, the Son of a carpenter turned Rabbi directs the fisherman where to go fishing. Peter was a professional fisherman. He'd been around the lake a time or two. He knew that in this lake, the best time and place to go fishing was in the shallow water and at night. (cf: John 21:3–8) So Peter says:

“Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!” (Luke 5:5)

But rather than protest against Jesus' direction, Peter says:

“... at your word I will let down the nets.” (Luke 5:5)

Peter is the expert fisherman. Jesus is a preacher. And Jesus Word went against Peter's own professional wisdom and experience which told him there were no fish where Jesus said to fish. Peter has no good reason to let down the nets in the deep water in the daylight except for faith in Jesus' Word. Faith trusts God's word, which again, is the point of our text: ***Trust the Word of Jesus***. Like the servants at the wedding feast at Cana who filled those stone water jars with water and then took it to the master of the feast, they took Jesus at His Word. (cf: John 2:7)

So, too, with the fishermen. At the Word of Jesus, they dropped the nets and caught so many fish that their nets were breaking, and the two boats trying to haul in the great catch were sinking. (cf: Luke 5:6–7) It could've been a time for celebrating. Possibly the greatest catch of their careers. But our text says:

“... when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’” (Luke 5:8)

Notice that Peter is not afraid of the sinking boat. He's not afraid of dying. He's afraid of Jesus, the holy One of God, the Lord of creation whom even the wind and waves and fish obey. Peter knows a sinner can't stand in the presence of holiness. From Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden trying to hide their nakedness and themselves from God, to this day, sinners run away from God. Because you and I and all sinners are afraid to be seen as we really are.

Your fears and mine reveal our false idols. *“What are you afraid of?”* The answer to that question is the same as the answer to the question: *“Who are your false gods?”* Are you afraid to die, to hurt, or to lose someone close? Are you afraid of the future, or of the past, afraid that people might discover what happened in your past? Are you afraid of family, friends, or

neighbor? Are you afraid of the devil and all things unseen? Whatever you are afraid of – it controls you. Whatever you are afraid of – that is your god. The First Commandment teaches us to “*fear, love, and trust in God above all things.*” But how many other things are you afraid of?

Standing in a sinking boat full of fish, Peter has it right. He’s afraid of Jesus because he knows that he is a sinner and the God of creation has every right to judge him because of his sins. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah felt the same way when he had his vision of the Lord sitting upon His throne surrounded by seraphim. They were worshipping the Lord saying:

“*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*”
(Isaiah 6:3)

The sound of it shook the foundations of the temple under Isaiah’s feet as smoke filled the place. Isaiah knew that a sinner could not look at the Triune holy God and live. He knew that he was a sinner whose lips and life were anything **but** pure and holy. And here he is, standing in the presence of the Lord of hosts. (cf: Isaiah 6:4–5) But the Lord of hosts is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (cf: Psalm 86:15) A seraphim flies to him with a burning coal from the altar and touches it to Isaiah’s lips to purify them and speaks God’s Word of absolution saying:

“... *your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.*” (Isaiah 6:7)

This is how you and I poor miserable sinners can stand in the presence of our Holy and Almighty God and live to tell about it. Your guilt must be taken away. Your sin must be atoned and paid for. The preacher Jesus standing in the boat on the Sea of Galilee is the atoning sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, including your sin. Instead of condemning you because of your sin, Jesus bears your sin and carries every bit of it to the cross. Instead of condemning you for your sin, He goes to the cross so that He can be cursed, afflicted, stricken, and forsaken in your place, shedding His precious blood and dying for you. (cf: Isaiah 53:4)

Jesus looks at Peter in his sin and says:

“*Do not be afraid...*” (Luke 5:10)

Don’t fear brothers and sisters in Christ. There’s nothing to be afraid of. ***Trust the Word of Jesus.*** He says:

“¹⁷ *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*” (John 3:17)

Trust the Word of Jesus when He says:

“¹⁶ *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” (John 3:16)

Trust the Word of Jesus. It was a divine necessity that He proclaim His Good News message of salvation. And because He would one day victoriously return to heaven and be seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus called Peter and other disciples to be fishers of men as witnesses of His death and resurrection. Even today He calls sinful men, just like Isaiah and Peter, as pastors to preach the Good News of Christ crucified for sinners. The pastor is merely Jesus’ mouthpiece who has been called in the Name of Jesus to proclaim His Gospel Word, speaking His Word of Absolution, attaching His Word to water in your Baptism, and attaching His Word to bread and

wine so that your pastor can put the body and blood of Jesus into your mouth in His Holy Supper. It's where Jesus forgives you of all your sins, sins of unclean lips and unclean life, sins of false idols and fears of things that can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. (cf: Matthew 10:28)

It is by the powerful Word of Jesus that disciples are made, and Christ's Church is established, grows, and is sustained. Casting a net into the sea and bringing up a great catch of fish is not the same as baiting a hook and luring a fish to be caught. The Gospel needs no bait. God's Word does what it says. You can trust it. So publicly confess it. It needs to be preached.

You don't have to be a preacher to tell people the Gospel message of salvation. It's for the Christian to share with his neighbor. So publicly confess it. Jesus' Word creates faith and is the power of salvation to all who believe. (cf: Romans 1:16, 10:17) It's for the Christian to trust and believe. We confess what we believe. This is what marks us as Christians. Fellow redeemed, Jesus is not content to be silent. He wants His Word to be preached to you and all people. He wants His promises to be heard by you and all people. He wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth of His Word. (cf: 1 Timothy 2:4) It is the preaching and confessing of the Word of Jesus that creates disciples and will sustain Christ's church on earth until the end of time.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.