

Sermon Draft

Text: Luke 5:1–11

Sermon: Jesus Called Them For Us

The disciples of Jesus are an unlikely bunch. Jesus didn't call disciples from the schools in Jerusalem, but from the shores of Galilee. The accounts of the calling of the disciples are wonderful for us. Jesus did not want his words to be spoken in a corner, so he calls witnesses who would make his words and works known to the world.

Jesus tells Peter, *“do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”* Peter had previously met Jesus and followed him, seemingly, for a time before he returned to fishing. (John 1:42) With these words, Jesus places Peter permanently into the office of apostle. This also helps us understand Peter's fear. Peter is able to determine from the great catch of fish that Jesus has other plans for him, that Peter would be a pastor, and he trembles.

As Jesus calls his disciples we are tempted to think, “Jesus also calls us to gather people into his Church.” But rather than consider how we are called like Peter, let us consider this morning that Jesus called them, for us.

Jesus is not content to preach in a corner. He is not pleased to do his works in secret. He knows that his words are words of life. He knows that his works, especially his death and resurrection, are the salvation of the world. So, Jesus not only goes to the cross for our salvation, he also calls apostles, and after them pastors, so that the word of the cross would go out unto all the world.

In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther says, *“Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe on Him, and have Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel [1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 4:6]. The work of redemption is done and accomplished [John 19:30]. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on*

[Colossians 2:3]. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would be useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own” (LC II 38).

Jesus wants to get the Word of reconciliation to us. As we hear how Jesus called Peter, we are reminded that Jesus sees to it that we hear the preaching of the Gospel, that we know about his death and resurrection, and that we have life in believing this Word.

But first, before Jesus makes Peter a pastor, he’s got some unfinished business.

Let’s imagine it, then, that morning on the Sea of Galilee. Peter, James, John, and their crew had fished all night. They had worked extra hours trying to find a few fish, but they were skunked. Now there is only cleaning up and heading home for some rest so they can get after it again at night. But then they see Jesus coming along with a crowd. Peter knows Jesus.

His brother Andrew had introduced them a year or so ago. Peter had been with Jesus at the wedding at Cana. Peter knows Jesus, and he believes in him; Peter is a Christian.

But now Peter is back in his boat fishing. Perhaps Jesus had sent him home for a while; we don't know. Perhaps Peter had thought the weeks he'd spent with Jesus were all there would be. But now that familiar and blessed face is back. Jesus comes to Peter this morning, followed by a crowd, and asks Peter to take him out onto the water a little way. Peter does, and Peter listens as Jesus preaches. But then Jesus turns to Peter and stunningly says, ***“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch”*** (v 4).

Now Peter could have protested. “Nothing all night. Nothing in the nets. You can't catch fish in the daytime. You can't catch fish in the deep. You preach. I'll fish.” But Peter doesn't. He follows the command of Jesus. ***“At your word I will let down the nets”*** (v 5). And the One who spoke on the fifth day and created the fish in the sea summons the fish to the net.

The catch is big enough to break the net and sink two boats. And look what happens.

Peter, in this catch of fish, sees what Jesus is up to, that he is making a claim on Peter. This great catch of fish is not to make Peter a great fisherman but to end his fishing altogether. Jesus is saying to Peter, “Now you are mine,” and Peter is afraid.

In the middle of a huge pile of flopping fish, and in the middle of a sinking boat, Peter falls down on his knees at Jesus’ feet and begs him, ***“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”*** (v 8). You’d think he might have other things on his mind, but Peter is not terrified of sinking; he is not afraid of dying. He is afraid of Jesus, afraid of his holiness and wrath, and afraid of this claim that Jesus is making on him. And Peter is right to be afraid.

Our fears tell us about our idols. “What are you afraid of?” The answer to that question is the same as the answer to the question, “What are your gods?” Are you afraid to die, to hurt, to lose, to be lost?

Are you afraid of the past, of the future, of what might happen, or that people would find out what did happen? Are you afraid of your parents, your children, your boss, your neighbor? Are you afraid of pain, afraid of yourself, afraid of the devil? Whatever it is, 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 we afraid of? Peter has it right that day, knee deep in fish in a sinking boat: he is afraid of Jesus, and he is afraid because of his sin. “*Depart from me, Lord. I’m a sinner.*” The last thing that sinners want is Jesus to be hanging around, because his coming should terrify us. No matter what trouble we’re in, this is our most profound and pressing concern: Jesus should judge us because of our sins.

But he doesn’t. Instead of condemning us because of our sin, Jesus takes our sin, bears our sin, wears our sin to the cross. And there, instead of condemning us, he is cursed, afflicted, stricken, forsaken in our place. Jesus suffers for us, dies for us.

Jesus looks at Peter in his sin and says, listen, “Do not be afraid” (v 10). Don’t fear. There is nothing to be afraid of. I am not angry. I did not come to judge you, to condemn you, or to destroy you. I’ll take care of your sin. I’ll make a way for you to be alive and live with me forever.

To Peter and to us, Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid.” This is the absolution, the forgiveness of sins, the purest and sweetest Gospel. When the knowledge of our sin and God’s holiness pushes out every other fear so that we stand terrified of God’s wrath, and only God’s wrath, when we at last say, “God, I fear you.” God says to us, “I am nothing to be afraid of. Look, here is my Son, crucified for you.”

And then he says, “Look, here is my servant Peter, sent to preach you the Good News. Look, here is my servant John, James, Paul, sent to you as witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Look, here is Moses, Abraham, David, Isaiah, preachers of my name and kindness.

And look, here is your pastor, sent in my name to bring the Good News to you, to forgive your sins, to baptize you, to put the body and blood of Jesus into your mouth.”

Jesus is not content to be silent. He wants to be preached to you. He wants his promises to be heard by you. He wants to be believed in by you. He wants his name and kindness to echo in your ears and in your hearts because he loves you.

We rejoice in the calling of Peter and all the Apostles because we see in this calling how Jesus still loves us. He not only dies for us, but he calls Peter and his apostles and his pastors so that you would know it, believe it, rejoice in it, and have eternal life in his name.

Amen