

Luke 5:1 – 16

^{5:1} Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around him and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; ² and he saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. ³ And he got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And he sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' ⁵ Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as you say and let down the nets.' ⁶ When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; ⁷ so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!' ⁹ For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.' ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

¹² While he was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored him, saying, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' ¹³ And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ And he ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' ¹⁵ But the news about him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Cultural Background:

- Lake of Gennesaret = Sea of Galilee
- Fish hide during the day. So Jewish fishermen fish all night.
- Lepers had to live separately from the rest of the Jewish community. When near people, they had to shout, 'Unclean, unclean!' to announce their own presence and warn people not to touch them. They lived very lonely lives.

Questions

1. Read the passage, cultural background notes, recall last week's study: Last time, we saw Jesus in Luke 4:14 – 44 get rejected twice. The first time, it was because Nazareth didn't want to love their enemies. The second time, it was because Capernaum didn't want to share him with others. So now, we're going to see Jesus recruit followers who would really follow him!
2. Set the scene
 - a. What would it be like if a Presidential candidate or the Pope got into your car and asked you to drive around while he spoke to people?
 - b. What was Jesus doing before speaking to Simon? Picture the scene. Preaching, catching people's interest. Jesus gets into the boat because water acts as a natural amplifier. It enables him to reach more people.
 - c. What must Simon Peter's life have been like before he met Jesus? What's the life of a fisherman? Routine...day after day the same thing. This is a big contrast with the life Jesus calls us into.
3. The great catch
 - a. How did Simon feel when Jesus told him how to fish? What emotions went through him? How did he feel about Jesus?
 - b. But what does Jesus do in response? How must Simon have felt when he saw his nets bursting?
 - c. Jesus shows Simon how small Simon's life is like? What would it be like if Jesus got straight A's without studying? Aced tests without cracking open the book and going to lecture? Won at basketball without practicing? Wouldn't that show us how small our lives are? How small our dreams are? Jesus is hinting that our lives could be way bigger with him than they would be by ourselves. For frosh – your lives might feel so much bigger than before now that you're in Boston. But pretty soon, you'll have that feeling again that your lives are small. Upperclassmen know this. *Leader illustrate this personally.*

When I was a freshman, I was a friend with a frosh woman next door to me. She was wrestling with giving Jesus her whole life. Once she decided to pray, "All right, Jesus, I'm afraid of what will happen if I really give you my whole life. But I want to take a step." In a sense, she said, "I want to let you into my boat," so to speak. That night, she felt like Jesus was challenging her to hang out with and care for certain people a little longer than she had planned. That night she had to write a paper. So she went down to the computer cluster in her dorm at around midnight. When 2am rolled around, she was still down there, exhausted. There were times where she would nod off with her fingers on the keyboard. But when she would wake up, she would find that she had somehow typed a few paragraphs. She didn't remember typing those things at all. When she finished that paper an hour later, she couldn't explain where the thoughts in her paper had come from. She said, "They were even better than what I would have written on my own. I think that Jesus is telling me something." That never happened to her again. But that didn't discourage my friend because she took it in the right way - not as a guarantee that every time she reached out to people that Jesus would finish her homework, because it wasn't that. It was a sign to her that her own dreams were too small. Wouldn't it feel weird to see that Jesus could do in a snap what you could never do in your whole lifetime? Simon had to acknowledge that he could never have caught that much fish in his life ever. My friend had to acknowledge that Jesus is much smarter than her, and that her old dreams and ambitions were so small they were ridiculous. Jesus got into her boat. He got into her life. He got right into her frustrations and stresses and what she thought of herself. And by making those things seem trivial, he cracked open a whole new world to her. He showed her that her life could really be about greater things.

Jesus has come to show us greater things. Now this kind of miraculous thing may or may not happen to you, but the important thing is that Jesus wants you to reevaluate all your hopes and dreams. Why are you here? Is it just to get away from your parents? To party a little more? To find someone to marry? To get good grades, so you can get a decent job? **Is it to do things that are, frankly, mediocre?** In fact, it appears that we have hit a crisis of significance in our society. What makes our lives significant? It's a little harder to answer that question.

When I was a junior in high school, despite how independent I wanted to be, I found myself drawn to Jesus. I was interested in who he was. I started going to a worship service where I learned about Jesus. After about seven months of this, one of my friends from this church said to me, "Let's go spend our spring break in Mexico." There was a group of Christian folks who were going to go there and do various things. I thought we'd be building affordable housing or new buildings or something: something I could see with my hands and be proud of, something that I could look back on and say, "That was a total guy thing to do, and I did that." Later I found out that 2,000 other Christians were going as part of the larger program. Well, we got there, a small town near the border of California and Mexico, and I saw poverty like I had never seen before. People were living in cardboard shacks with three walls and an aluminum roof. We had to be really careful about drinking the water and being in the shower. And we didn't get to build any buildings. Instead, we played with kids and taught them little Bible lessons. In my mind, that wasn't a guy thing to do. All those kids cared about was, "Are you going to come back tomorrow?" They didn't care about the fact that I had big dreams and that I was going places. But it hit me that the love that the kids showed me was kind of like the unconditional love that God said He had for me; He didn't love me because of what I had done or what I thought I was going to accomplish. That was a lot for me to handle. I didn't want to be there anymore. I was taking a week off of swimming training almost in the middle of the season to be there, and I was risking my performance that season to care about these kids. But I looked around me and there were 2,000 people there who loved Jesus who were glad to be in Mexico and glad to spend their time that way. At that moment, my life just seemed so selfish and small it was unbearable. I felt like I had wasted my life up to that point. That's when I said, "Jesus, I'm sorry. My life just feels ridiculously small. Take my life and do what you want."

- d. Why does Simon suddenly say, 'I am a sinful man'? What's going on for him? He's embarrassed about the way he mouthed off sarcastically to Jesus? Do you relate to this? What if our proper response to Jesus is, 'My dreams and my life have been way too small – forgive me'?
4. What Jesus really calls us to
 - a. Jesus says that Simon and the disciples will henceforth catch men. What had Jesus been doing right before telling Simon to let his nets down? Teaching the people from the boat.
 - b. What had Jesus been doing with the crowds around him? Fishing for people. Jesus role models what he wants them to do.
 - c. What does preaching have to do with fishing?
 - d. Jesus uses a 'fishing' metaphor for Simon because it's what he's familiar with.
 - e. Jesus calls Simon to build the community Jesus wants. This is not just an individualized 'Jesus and me' relationship; right away we know that we'll have responsibility for others. Jesus also wants to build his community through us. How do you feel about this? (Responses to emphasize are 'insecure' to 'wow!' An 'insecure' response is similar to Simon's own initial response. A 'wow' response is similar to Simon's later response, enthusiastically jumping on Jesus' bandwagon.)
5. Disciples' response
 - a. So why does Simon decide to follow Jesus after all? Because he had seen Jesus heal his mother-in-law, back in ch.4. Because what Jesus offered was attractive.
 - b. What emotions might they have been feeling as they left everything to follow Jesus?
 - c. What was it like for them to leave everything? Notice that they left behind their fishing boats, their family business, their jobs, their roles in society. They left behind their old identity and started into a new one defined by Jesus.
 - d. When Jesus calls you, he also calls you to call others to him. Are you ready to also become fishers of people? In what ways is this a familiar thing to you? In what ways is this an unfamiliar thing to you?
 - e. How does this passage give you a sense of the purpose and meaning Jesus brings into our lives? Do you want this?

6. Then, notice how Jesus encounters the leper right after encountering Simon Peter. What are the similarities and differences between the leper and Simon Peter? Below are the similarities and differences between these two men's responses to Jesus.

Simon Peter	Leprous Man
^{5:8} But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying , 'Go away from me Lord , for I am a sinful man! '	^{5:12} ...a man covered with leprosy... saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored him, saying , ' Lord , if you are willing, you can make me clean. '

7. How must this episode have given Simon Peter hope? He had just said, 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man...You don't want to give me those responsibilities because I'll blow it; I've got major problems.' Don't we sometimes feel the same way? 'But Lord, I lose my temper with my roommate. I struggle with LOTS of issues. So don't involve me. I'll blow it.' Simon Peter acted as if he were unclean and leprous. Jesus is saying back to him, 'I can deal with those unclean areas of your life. Just let me touch your life in those places.'
8. How might Jesus give you new purpose and hope? Especially if you're afraid of being involved with him? What areas of your life need the touch of Jesus?