

There is Another King: Jesus

Luke – Acts

Falling Down and Falling In

Luke 5:1 – 11

Introduction: A Decision That Would Change Your Life

How many of you know the TV show American Idol? What is so amazing about Kelly Clarkson? That in just one night she got a recording contract, her song A Moment Like This surged up on the charts and is played all the time on the radio. Well, what would you do if someone came up to you and gave you an opportunity to make a decision that would change the entire course of your life? What if someone told you that you could be the next winner of American Idol, the next Kelly Clarkson? What if Steven Spielberg or (even better) Ang Lee were to walk in this room, call your name and say, “Come with me. Leave BU and you can be the star in my next series of films. I’ll train you in everything you need to know. You can be the next Zhang Zhi Yi (trained in ballet, fencing, martial arts!), Gong Li or Chow-Yun Fat” or someone like that. What would you decide? Sound crazy? What if Michael Jordan came into this room, pointed to you and said to come and join his team in Washington and that he would make you into a great basketball player? He’ll train you personally. Would you go? Let me try to make it more interesting. What if you felt in the deepest part of your heart that whatever you were being invited to was what you’ve always wanted life to be like. This is what you were made for! Would you pass up this opportunity? What would you do?

I think that there is a part of us that hopes this would happen to you. You might believe that when you left high school and entered into the great unknown that is BU, that someone or something or even BU as an institution would say, “Come with me, leave your home town, leave what you were doing before. And I’ll train you to be a new person and do something great, something you’ll find meaningful.” **But does it happen that way?**

We are looking for someone to give us an identity. I had that longing at different points in my life. In high school, I was the captain of the Varsity water polo and swimming teams starting my freshman year. I was leading juniors and even seniors as a freshman! You would think that I’d be satisfied with the sense of achievement – not to mention the parties I was invited to – that this would bring. But I wasn’t. I can’t explain why I felt that way. I still had this sense: I wish someone would come along, pick me, train me, and give me a new identity.

Some of you who are new to this fellowship may be asking, “What is this group about? What do people believe here? What are we here for?” One way to answer that is: we want to be people who are asking serious questions about our identity and our sense of purpose. So the question immediately turns: What are you about? Where do you derive a sense of identity and purpose?

Context:

We’re going to look at someone who experienced just that. It’s the story of Simon Peter deciding to follow Jesus. Now the setting of this story is early on in Luke’s biography of Jesus, what we now refer to as the Gospel of Luke. Jesus has emerged as a powerful charismatic man in a situation that is rife with political and social conflicts. This is the world of Roman imperialism and oppression. People are wondering whether Jesus will gather Israel together as a military force and expel the Romans. He’s able to do powerful things like cure people of disease and he’s eloquent beyond measure. He’s provoked a wide range of responses from people already. Some people have tried to kill him. Others have gotten down on their knees and bowed before him. This is the kind of man he is. As we pick up the story, Jesus is now calling specific people to follow him. He is building a movement, and he’s beginning to invest his life in them. Let’s pick up there.

Jesus Gets Into Simon’s Boat: v.1-3

“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.”

Sure enough, Jesus is the most talked about person in his day. Here he is, gathering steam and momentum for his movement. A crowd has followed him and Luke says they were ‘pressing around him.’ If you were in that crowd, you’d be squeezed in tight next, rubbing shoulders, trying to see over the tall guy in front, straining to hear what Jesus is saying. Picture the scene. Picture Jesus’ posture. He’s speaking to the crowds, perhaps arms outstretched, teaching them. Remember what Jesus is doing here, because it’ll be significant later.

Jesus is probably aware that some people are having a hard time hearing him – remember there were no microphones or speakers back then. So he takes advantage of water as a natural amplifier. He gets into a nearby fishing boat and pushes out a little ways so that even more people could hear him.

Enter the owner of this boat: Simon. Probably in his 20’s or 30’s, Simon has been a fisherman all his life. His father Jonah had probably been a fisherman. His grandfather had probably been a fisherman. He’s not from one of the well-known families of Israel, but he probably does ok. His life isn’t full of drama, but it’s ok. Simon is married. In fact, a few days earlier, Jesus had healed Simon’s mother-in-law of a high fever (Lk.4:38), so we get the sense that Simon has been keeping a close but appreciative eye on Jesus.

What would it be like if Steven Spielberg or Ang Lee or Michael Jordan got into your car and asked you to drive around while he spoke to people? That’s what it must have felt like for Simon as Jesus got into his boat. “Wow! Not only do I get to hear exactly what Jesus is saying, I get to be seen with Jesus!” [gesturing to himself, this is my boat! This is my ride!]

Jesus Gets Into Simon’s Life: v.4-7

But Simon gets more involved than he expects in v.4, “when Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Now if I were Simon, that would seem like one of the most random requests ever. Why would Jesus want to go fishing now, in late morning?”

And, we get a glimpse of how Simon feels about this in v.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.” Do you catch the impatient edge in Simon’s voice? Not only had they already washed their nets and were ready to go home. Not only are they tired from a long night’s work (the best fishing happens at night), but they’d caught absolutely nothing. Not one fish.

What’s probably going through Simon’s mind is, “What do you know about fishing?!? Sure – you’re a great speaker, healer, wise man. Maybe you’re even a good carpenter since that is your family’s trade. But when it comes to fishing, I’m the expert. I know how to fish, when to fish, where to fish. I wish you would stick to your business, and I’ll stick to mine.” You know what it feels like when someone challenges you in your area of expertise, especially the area of your identity? That’s how Simon feels. So Simon gives Jesus a little lip.

I did the same thing. My parents raised me to be fairly independent, to not rely on anyone, and to never be in debt to anyone. So for example, I didn’t like being in study groups. I thought I got more done by myself. I liked swimming better than other sports because it was a sport I did by myself. When I was a sophomore in high school, my parents started arguing about getting a divorce. At that point, I decided that I wasn’t going to depend on anyone, not even my parents. Emotionally, I was going to be an island. When I imagined myself winning awards and medals, I didn’t want to have anyone else to thank. So when a friend of mine talked to me about letting Jesus have my life, I laughed. “No one knows how to take care of me better than me. I’m the expert in my life.” That’s what I thought. “Jesus may have been important two thousand years ago, but who is he that he could challenge me in my area of expertise? Running my own life?!?” I gave Jesus some lip.

Now let's be honest here. I'm not alone in that, am I? You've probably done that, too. Given Jesus some lip. You've said, "Who are you, to challenge me in my area of expertise? Running my own life? Defining my own identity? I know what I'm doing. I have a plan." We'll see what Jesus does to that. Or maybe you don't have a plan. Maybe you don't feel like you know what you're doing here. Maybe you're looking for someone to choose you and make your life significant and give you an identity? What do you do then?? Hang on; we'll see what Jesus does.

Simon agrees to set out for deeper water. Maybe he does it out of respect for Jesus, or maybe out of respect for the fact that Jesus healed his mother-in-law. Either way, he sets the sails and moves away from the shore. Things must have happened so quickly after that that Simon didn't have much time to think. In v.6-7, "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." The fish must have swarmed towards them from out of nowhere. The nets got so full they were about to break. They quickly called for the other boat to come over to help, but the fish keep coming. In a second, both boats are sinking!

I love what this shows us about Jesus. Jesus first gets into Simon's boat. Then he gets into his life. He gets into Simon's own expertise, which "happened" to be frustrated. Simon had been running his own fishing business for years. And on the best of seasons, he still had to deal with frustrations like catching nothing all night. You see, most of us have an area of your life where you feel like you are the expert (it's an illusion!) or an area of life where you feel like you want to be the expert. It's what makes us feel great even though it causes us frustration, too, because that's where we feel most invested. Jesus will just touch that area in some way, and when he does, everything changes.

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, as we reflected yesterday on September 11th, 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. Why? Because two realizations appeared on the American conscience that affect our sense of significance. First, that any of our achievements can disappear just like that. <snap!> Second, that our way of life has somehow been built at great cost to other people.

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."

What about your life? Do you get the feeling that your dreams are **too small**? That your life is **too small**? That your nets are **too small**? That your boats are **too small**? That the highest visions you've had for your life are still too blasé for Jesus? Do you ever get that feeling? In the movie *Braveheart*, when William Wallace says, "All men die. Not all men truly live," meaning their lives were too small, do you nod your head, saying, "Yeah, that's true"? Or even, "**That's true of me**"?

Jesus Gets Into Simon's Whole World: v.8-10a

So what happened when Simon's world was cracked open, when Jesus showed Simon that his dreams were too small? Let's see: In v.8-10, "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, O Lord! 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."

For Simon, the air was thick with tension. He has just caught more fish than he knows what to do with, at the request of this Jesus who wasn't supposed to know anything about fishing. Then Simon realizes that Jesus was saying, "I know about your life, don't I?" Then Simon realizes that Jesus could probably see right through the hot flush of embarrassment on his face, see right through the look of shock in his eyes, and see right into his heart. And his heart had laughed Jesus off, and he had just mouthed off to the most powerful man he had ever met: A man who was still right there in his boat.

So Simon fell down. That is the posture that says, "I am at your mercy!" And he says, "Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Notice that Simon gives Jesus the title "Lord"??? Boy what a quick turnaround!!! At the same time, he says to Jesus, "Go away from me." Why would he say that? It's because he feels like he is not worthy to be involved with Jesus. He feels like Jesus is making a big mistake by choosing him.

Maybe some of you have felt that, too. Most of us have felt inadequate for something or other. But with Jesus, the stakes just go up, don't they? Maybe you feel too messed up on the inside that you didn't want Jesus to choose you. He's too good. If he gives you any kind of responsibilities, you're afraid you'll mess it up. Maybe you feel insecure about your ability to care for others. Maybe you had a bad summer spiritually, and feel like that disqualifies you from being chosen by him to be with him and be involved in what he's doing. Maybe you feel like you've wasted your life, either because you feel aimless and confused or because you were like me and defined your life very selfishly.

Jesus Invites Simon into His Life: v.10b – 11

But Jesus doesn't say, "You're right! Why am I wasting my time with you?!" He says, in v.10b And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him."

I love how Jesus relates to Simon here. Jesus sees the secret hope that is burning in Simon's heart. Jesus sees the hope for a purpose, the newfound humility, the longing for a new identity. So he welcomes Simon. He doesn't reject him. He says, "Do not fear." In other words, "Don't worry about being a messed up person. I can deal with that. Come to me as you are. I can work in your life, heal you and transform you." In fact, the very next thing Jesus does is heal a leper, which seems to be a symbolic gesture for Simon, saying, "You see, I can cleanse you. Just let me touch your life." We'll find out more about that next week.

For now, Jesus, this great man above all great men and women, chooses Simon. When he says, "From now on you will be catching people," a few things start settling down in Simon's head. First, he understands that Jesus was, in a sense, casting a net and catching people. In fact, Jesus' gestures earlier (arms drawing people to himself) might even have been the same gestures Simon made (arms drawing nets into himself). So Simon gets it. He understands that his own life is going to look more and more like Jesus'. And it's already started. This is the master and the apprentice, the Jedi and the Padawan learner. And one day, Simon would stand up in front of a large crowd and speak (arms drawing people to himself), and two thousand people would call Jesus "Lord" in one day.

[Something else that might have occurred to Simon is that this was a fulfillment of a prophecy. An old Jewish prophet named Ezekiel saw a vision of living waters coming out of God's new temple into the desert and sea, causing the new waters to teem with fish. Then it says fishermen spread their nets (Ezekiel 47:1-12)...and they will catch fish according to their kinds, very many (nets break!). So Jesus' call to fisherman announces the age is here, the place is teeming with fish according to every nation, so get your nets, let's go! (Brian Morgan)]

When Jesus calls us, he doesn't call us into just a quiet little tutoring time where it's just him and you. He calls us to build his kingdom community. He called Simon to build a kingdom community. That is what has eternal purpose.

I'm reminded of the experience of a friend of mine. When my friend came to Jesus as an undergrad, he gathered 10 of his best friends together and said, "I've started learning about Jesus and I've become a Christian. I'm wondering if you want to study the Bible with me for a few weeks to me if you think I made a mistake." Six out of those ten friends came to give their lives to Jesus as well. Jesus was calling them.

For me, my wife and friends of ours, Jesus led us to live together in a house in an inner city neighborhood here in Boston. And we've become a small team of friends living life together and sharing Jesus with others. After being an ambitious independent, who would have thought I'd be sharing my house with other people? After being totally success oriented, who would have thought I'd be living in the inner city? But it's been meaningful beyond what I could have thought. Over the past few years, we've seen Jesus at work through us. The violence of the past 2 summers has been the backdrop of our recent experience. But we've become friends with a lot of families, youth, and teenagers.

When people see the life of Jesus being given to others, that can be a powerful experience that God really uses. That is the kind of impact you and Jesus can have together.

So how might this look for you on campus?

- (1) You can let Jesus into your boat.
- (2) You can let Jesus reshape your hopes and dreams for your life.
- (3) You can join with other people who are committed to let Jesus do that.
- (4) You can share Jesus with others, sharing what Jesus is doing with us.

[C.S. Lewis, the Oxford professor who came to know Jesus late in life and then wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* said, "If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."]

So, you might say, I want to go with Jesus. What happens? Something terrific and terrifying, something liberating and frightening all at the same time. For Simon and his fishing buddies to choose Jesus, verse 11 says, "When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him." They left behind their fishing boats, their family business, their jobs, their roles in society. They left behind their old identity and let Jesus define who they were and what their lives were going to be about.

When Jesus calls you, he also calls you to call others to him. He calls you to be like him. He will totally change your life. Are you ready for him?

Conclusion

I just want to highlight where we're going with our weekly large group meetings. We will be continuing on in Luke. After Jesus calls Simon, Simon doesn't actually do anything for 4 chapters. It's only until chapter 9 that Jesus sends Simon and the others out on a mission. So the question is, "What happens in chapter 5 – 8?" What happens in these chapters is training in spirituality. Jesus is going to teach us some amazing lessons in this section, lessons that are vital to us understanding him. So please come back next week. I look forward to seeing you then!!!