

The Real Meaning of Discipleship

Luke 5:1-11

September 18, 2016

In chapter 4, Luke showed us how, early in Jesus' ministry, there were attempts to oppose and distract Jesus from his mission. The devil tried to tempt him, the people of Nazareth tried to kill him, the people of Capernaum, they tried to keep him all to themselves. But Jesus resisted temptation, he escaped from harm, he stayed focused on his priority to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to other cities as well. He left Capernaum as we read in Luke 4:44, "And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea."

Now, when we come into chapter 5, Jesus has come back to Capernaum. An unspecified amount of time that's passed by, perhaps a few weeks or so, we don't really know, but during that time he was preaching; he was engaged in an itinerant ministry, traveling from city to city in Galilee, preaching the Kingdom

and then demonstrating the power of the Kingdom not only through his preached word but through divine healing. Very early on in his ministry, Jesus was even thinking about the continuation of his ministry. He intended to perpetuate the preaching of the Gospel into the future, and so he chose disciples. That's what we're going to see this morning, is this calling of these first disciples.

We actually mentioned a couple of weeks ago, a couple weeks ago, some of you may remember this, that Jesus had already called his first four disciples, he called Simon and Andrew and James and John, two sets of brothers. Those four men were present at the synagogue in Capernaum. They had been John's disciples, and then at John's urging as he pointed them to the Christ, they left John to follow Jesus. They were there from the very beginning.

So they were there with Jesus when he turned water into wine. They were there with him at the very first temple clearing, when he walked into the temple courtyard and cleared out all the money-changers and those who were buying and

selling. They were with him during his brief but his fruitful ministry in Samaria, when he started that whole outreach and that fruitful evangelism, it started with one sinful Samaritan woman, then it spread to the entire town. Then, before returning to Capernaum, which is recorded at the end of John 4, that section Jesus had healed an official's son there. He wasn't even present in Capernaum when he healed the son, he just gave the command and it was done.

These four disciples, Andrew and Simon, James and John, they had already seen a lot. They had seen great power; they had heard amazing, unparalleled teaching. When Jesus came to Capernaum, he started by recruiting them into discipleship. As we mentioned a couple of weeks ago, that's recorded in Matthew, chapter 4 and Mark, chapter 1. He recruited them first, there, to discipleship. Then they were at the synagogue as we read in Luke, chapter 4, they were there to hear him teach. They watched him cast out a demon. They went to Simon's house, and they watched him heal Peter's mother-in-law of that severe fever. Then they saw how he healed all the sick and the infirm in Capernaum later that evening; he healed them well late into the night, touching each one of them.

So when Jesus left Capernaum, we find out here that his disciples stayed behind. They went back to their commercial fishing business. Now, he's back. Luke chapter 5:1-11, he's going to call them into permanent discipleship. At this point in the narrative, the focus is going to be on Simon Peter, he features in this narrative, but also on James and John, who show up at the end. We might assume that this includes Andrew as well.

Later in the chapter, Jesus is going to call the tax collector, Levi. That whole calling and everything around that, surrounding that event, occupies the rest of the chapter. We know Levi is Matthew, he's the writer of the gospel of Matthew. Then, in Luke 6:12-16, this section, this sub-section is going to end when Jesus calls and commissions the Twelve, the ones he called and commissioned and chose as his official apostles. At that point, the period of recruitment is over; he's got his team, and then we get into the Sermon on the Mount.

So that's a little preview of where we're going to be heading in the next few months, it's very exciting, amazing things that we're going to learn here, and it all starts, though, right here. It starts with the calling of Simon Peter, James and John and the way Jesus calls them here helps us to see and understand, like they needed to see and understand, the real meaning of discipleship.

Let's get right into our outline, point one, real discipleship means, point number one, that we listen whenever Jesus teaches. We listen whenever Jesus teaches. This is where all real discipleship begins, right? It begins with what he says, it begins with the initiation of his teaching. We have got to listen carefully whenever Jesus is teaching. Take a look at Luke 5:1-3, "On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat." Stop there.

Luke has written this and set the scene for what follows, and we see, just from those verses, just from the setting, how important it is to listen to Jesus' teaching and preaching, that is the key to discipleship. Jesus prioritized preaching to the people, teaching his disciples. So we know that if it was valuable to the master, it must be a fundamental aspect of discipleship. Jesus preached in Nazareth. He preached in Capernaum. He left Capernaum to keep on preaching and here we see him again. What is he doing? He's preaching.

Remember the warning from J. C. Ryle last week: "Beware of despising preaching." Never, never denigrate preaching! Never de-prioritize preaching, never demean it, never diminish it, never back-burner it. Preaching is God's means, his God ordained means of saving and sanctifying his people. After all, how will they hear without what? Without a preacher, right? When we preach God's Word, we are explaining the meaning of the Scripture. We are conveying truth to the minds and the hearts of people.

We're taking God's Word, and we're confronting people with the Word of God in their own spirit. The Spirit of God connects with the person, his spirit, her spirit, that is how the Spirit awakens faith. That is how the Spirit awakens desire for virtue. That's how the Spirit motivates us towards obedience. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." So, if a person is not exposed to sound teaching, that person is cut off from this means of divine grace, which is the fundamental means of divine grace, because it's the ministry of the Holy Spirit himself.

It's the Word preached, that the Holy Spirit uses to regenerate. It's the Word preached, that the Holy Spirit uses to give new life, to cause people to be born again, to awaken faith in a dead sinner who comes to life. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:23, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through," What? "the living and abiding word of God."

How does that Word come but through preaching? When a sinner is born again by the regenerating ministry of the Spirit,

that person takes his first breath, which is repentance from dead works and faith in Jesus Christ. And on the basis of that faith, the saving work of God is set in motion. God imputes the sinner's sin to Christ, imputes the Savior's righteousness to that believing sinner, and on the basis of that faith, God justifies the sinner. God declares him righteous on the basis of faith. His sin completely atoned for, gone. All the wrath of God, the holy God, is satisfied, propitiated, and removed.

His sin has been completely atoned for by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then full and final redemption is secured, not just for the moment, but eternally by the perfect righteousness of the life of Jesus Christ and his obedience to God. United to him, we have no fear. United to him, we have no fear of divine wrath, no fear of judgment, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1, right? Every sin is forgiven, all wrath is satisfied, every slander is diffused, every accusation is silenced. No doubt can stand against the perfection of God's saving work. The conscience of the redeemed sinner can become what God intended, forever at rest. And all that saving activity is because the Word is preached.

That's why Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, encouraging us to continue receiving the preached Word, because it not only saves but it sanctifies. He wrote this, "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander." That's the prerequisite for what comes next. "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." We assume that to be true, that you have tasted that the Lord is good, and if you have, will long for more of that, long for more of the preached Word.

Just as the Word is powerful to raise dead sinners from the dead, it's powerful to sanctify redeemed sinners as well. If it can do the most profound work, it can do every other work as well. The Word renews the mind; the Word transforms the life. It causes that redeemed life to bring glory and honor and praise to God because of the saving work of Jesus Christ. No wonder Jesus spent so much effort to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God, right?

GRACE CHURCH



Notice, Luke 5:1 that the people leaned in close to hear it. The crowd was pressing in on him to hear the Word of God. The term used there, it refers to kind of a crushing force of, of a swollen crowd. I don't know if you've ever been in another country where they don't honor the personal space that we like as Americans, especially out here West. You know Daniel Boone, you know why he left the East, he said he needed more elbow room. I get it, I've gone to places on the East Coast, and I am Colorado in my veins. I love open spaces. I love to see forever. You go out there and you're shrouded and covered by trees.

But there's this crushing force surrounding Jesus, this swollen crowd, and they're all trying to lean in and hear him preach God's Word. So just picture the scene here. Jesus has returned to Capernaum. Just a few weeks before, he had virtually eradicated all sickness and all disease in a single night. He drove out all the demons, now he's back, and people are really excited to hear him preach and teach. He walked through the town preaching, and people are gathering, people are following; they're getting in, pressing closer and closer.

But depending on where they're positioned in relation to his preaching, in relation to his mouth and the sound of his voice, quite a few of them are having a hard time hearing him. His voice projects out in front of him, like any other human being, so it's only those directly in front of him who can hear him really well. People at the side, they're having a hard time hearing him; people in back, they can't hear anything.

So they keep pressing forward; they keep surrounding him. They're forcefully pressing around him. So Jesus finally has been backed up to the water's edge; his feet are getting wet in Lake Gennesaret, that's just another name for the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus, here, has an idea. In fact, it may very well be that he headed for the lake as he feels the crowd pressing in because he knew what to do to allow this massive crowd to hear his preaching.

As he looked around, Jesus saw some providential provision. He saw boats, he saw water, behind him he saw the land. The boats enable him to put a little distance between himself and the crowd, provide a suitable platform for teaching. The physics

of sound waves over the water would act as an amplifier to project his voice to people sitting on the shore. The land, that would act as an amphitheater so people could sit comfortably on the shore and listen to him. If you spend any time in the water fishing, boating, whatever, perhaps you've noticed how well sound carries over the water. Temperature variations over a body of water affect the way sound waves travel.

The air nearest to the surface of any open body of water is, it's cooler than the air that's slightly above it, which means that it has an effect on the sound waves, the ones closest to the surface travel more slowly than the sound waves further from the surface. So the sound waves actually go farther across the surface of the water than they do over any other surface. So be careful what kinds of fishing stories you tell out on the lake because everyone on the shore is listening to you.

When Jesus sat in the boat teaching, the sound waves of his voice, they were shaped and directed by the effect of the temperature on the water. Less of his voice was lost in the air above him; more of it was projected toward the people on the

shore, and Jesus knew that. As the Creator, he designed the water. He designed the temperature, the sound waves, and all the physics in between. He designed the auditory nerves. He knew the laws of physics, the mechanics of listening, because he created all that. So he used those elements of his surroundings to amplify his preaching. Problem solved.

That problem was solved, anyway, as verse 4 says, he was able to finish speaking to the people. The crowd heard the full force of his preaching, they learned more and more and more about the Kingdom of God. But now, there's another problem that Jesus needed to address. This passage is about calling disciples to discipleship, right? The crowd had been following him around all morning, pressing in close to hear his preaching, but where were his chosen disciples? What were they doing? Those men had been out fishing the night before. They were up all night. It's hard to listen to sermons when you've been up all night, right? Can I get an Amen? Oh, you just exposed yourself right there. Just exposed yourself. Now I know and you said it loudest, Mike. He works all night, by the way. I just want to take the pressure off Mike.

They'd been out fishing the night before. When Jesus comes by, they are out of their boats, they're sitting at the shore. They're washing out their nets. They were there to see the scene unfolding, and in the providence of God, their empty boats provided a ready platform for Jesus' preaching. But those boats would also become an object lesson, to learn the real meaning of discipleship.

As we said earlier, Jesus had already called these men to discipleship, Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20. That first call to discipleship had come before all the things we read about in Nazareth and Capernaum in Luke chapter 4. Back then, Jesus had again been walking by the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon Peter and Andrew, his brother, and they were casting a net into the sea, and he said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew and Mark both tell us that immediately they left their nets and followed him.

And right after that, Jesus continued walking by the shore, and that's where he saw James and his brother, John, the two sons of Zebedee. They were well-known, and they were in the

boats mending their nets and Jesus called them as well, and they left immediately, as well. They left their nets, they left the boat, they left their father with the hired men, and they followed him, too. They all followed immediately, but they didn't all follow completely, did they? There was an initial surge of excitement, but they hadn't continued to follow.

When Jesus left Capernaum on his preaching tour, these men stayed behind. Jesus' disciples returned to their fishing business, and when Jesus returned, that's where he found them, washing out their nets after a long, and by-the-way, a fruitless night of fishing. Don't miss the contrast here between the chosen and called disciples, and the crowds. What were the crowds doing in verse 1? They are pressing in on him, they're trying to hear the Word of God. What are the disciples doing? They were working, they are washing the gunk out of their nets.

Nothing wrong with working for a living. It's a noble thing to do, to work for a living. It's a good and godly thing to do to provide for your family, that's what they're doing. But when Jesus is preaching, you need to recognize, that is the priority,

set aside the nets or whatever it is that God has given you for work and partake of the ministry of the Word.

Again, for these fishermen, nothing wrong with working for a living, but Jesus had personally selected them for discipleship. He'd chosen them to follow him around, literally, that's what discipleship was. He wanted them to learn personally from him, to learn intimately from him as he carried out his Messianic ministry. That was the problem that he needed to address with them.

Now, to be fair, it's possible that these men didn't know that Jesus was back in town, perhaps he had returned to Capernaum late in the previous night. That very morning, the timing of his return had caught them off-guard, perhaps. But consider this, if they'd been following Jesus around, which is what he intended all along, they wouldn't have been in the position of washing their nets when he was preaching, would they? They would have been with him, at his side. His return would not have caught them off-guard at all. They would have

been listening to every word, just like the crowds were trying to do.

Folks, all that to say, don't ever take preaching for granted. Don't ever think, ah, I've heard this stuff before, it's just the Gospel again. It's just more stuff about Jesus and salvation, and growing in Christ, and the Kingdom of God, and his great sovereignty over all affairs, and the fact that he can take care of every need, and I need not worry about anything or be anxious. I need to love, and love him, and love others. I don't need to know more about that.

Listen, real discipleship means we are listening whenever Jesus is speaking, whenever his Word is proclaimed. And listen, this church is working very hard to make sure to get God's Word into you, not just on Sunday mornings in a one-time event, but all through the week. We love you. We want you to hear Jesus teach. When this church makes preaching and teaching available to you, beloved, you need it. You need it. Prioritize learning the truth. Avail yourself of the teaching because real



discipleship is about listening carefully, learning to understand and obey the Word of Christ.

Well, it looks like these disciples needed a little lesson in the real meaning of discipleship. They needed that lesson, but they needed a second lesson, as well, which is called point two in our outline, a little lesson called, Do whatever Jesus says. Do whatever he says. Take a look at verse 4, "When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.'" Stop there. We need to understand a few things about fishing on the Sea of Galilee to see the significance of what's going on here.

Simon is in the commercial fishing business. He's in partnership, along with the sons of Zebedee, James and John. They own boats, they've got all the gear, they've got the tackle, they've got huge fishing nets, they've even got some hired men to help with the labor. And think about this, when you picture these boats, don't imagine one of those little dinghies and rowboats that you saw on the flannel graph in Sunday school, this is not a little rowboat. These are big fishing vessels.

These are sturdy ships; they're large, they've got a deck on top, they've got a hold underneath.

The boat is large enough to transport Jesus and all twelve of his disciples across the lake and back again, they traversed the Sea of Galilee. It was strong enough to endure fierce storms that battered them on that sea. So don't think little, think pretty big, you might even picture in your mind's eye one of those fishing vessels like you see on TV, like the ones they use up in the Pacific Northwest for those, for those fishing shows, Greatest Catch or something like that, you know, where they're all about to die and then they catch big fish: That thing. Except this: Instead of using mechanical cranes and winches to deploy and retract the heavy nets, you know what they use? Men, men with big huge arms, burly guys, strong backs.

So when you think of Peter, James, and John, think about big dudes, these guys are playing linebacker for the Denver Broncos, that's the kind of guys you need to think about. These nets were heavy, they needed that strength. The nets had floats on the top edge, but they were weighted at the bottom edge, and

that caused the nets, when they were deployed, to extend vertically into the water. And that allowed them to, basically, put up a wall inside the sea, and the fish as a school would swim into that wall and get caught.

A boat might work alone, drawing a full net of fish into the boat or even dragging that net into shore. Or you might have two boats, probably like Peter, and James and John did; they probably worked together, working in tandem. They'd extend the nets between the two boats, and then they'd maneuver the boats to encircle the trapped fish, to close them in, gather all those fish into the boats. Fishermen generally, in the Sea of Galilee, did their work in the dark hours of the morning when the surface temperature cooled. The fish came close to the shore, and close to the surface to feed. Men let down the nets to the bottom and just scooped fish up.

But with the dawn, the sun came up, temperatures started to rise in the shallow water, and the fish returned to deeper waters during the day, where it was far more difficult to catch them. No fish sonars back then, no GPS in your boat, fishermen

didn't know where the fish were. That's the trick, I hear, to know where they fish are. They still don't, right? Even aided by that modern technology, people are banging on their. I've seen it. They bang on the GPS, this thing ain't working! The sonar thing, that... frustrated!

So these guys always would try to do what fishermen do, improve their chances of catching fish, knowing where they are. So they fished at night. Morning, then, was spent getting fish to market, cleaning all the muck, and the gunk, and the goop out of their nets, mending any holes, and getting everything ready for the next night of fishing. That was the plan on this particular morning. Until Jesus said, in the morning, "Put out to the deep and let down your nets for a catch." These men are tired. I'd imagine a bit frustrated after a night of hard, hard work in catching no fish. They're not fishing here as a hobby, and the last thing they want to do is to go out again. Clean nets, Peter, clean nets!

You can't see it in our English translation, but in the Greek it's very clear that Jesus spoke directly to Peter when he

said, "Put out into the deep." Peter's at the helm, he's steering the vessel, he's one of the principal owners in this enterprise, and so he's the captain of the boat. And Jesus wants Peter to steer the boat into the deep. Okay. But then Jesus commands, "Let down your nets for a catch." That command is not in the singular, it's in the plural. Jesus is commanding here, not just Peter but Peter's crew. He'd just taken over captaincy of the ship, as if he owned it! He is giving the orders now. He tells Simon to steer the boat to deep waters and he tells the hired crew, let the nets down, get ready for a catch.

It is easy to see how this might have grated a bit on Simon's nerves, right? Jesus, the carpenter-turned-prophet, wood working fine, preaching and teaching, okay, great. Casting out demons and healing, check and check. But fishing? Better back off, pal. That's Peter's domain, that's his area of expertise. This isn't the right time for fishing, it is not the right place for fishing. Going out into the deep, the nets aren't even long enough to reach the fish at depth, and even if they were, the Sea of Galilee is huge. And just a reminder, you gotta know where they fish are. To catch at this time of the day and this location, not gonna happen.

You can imagine as Jesus gives these two commands. You can imagine Peter's crew looking up at him like, hey, boss, you gonna let this happen? We just washed these nets, catching nothing. We're a bit grumpy, we're ready for a nap, we don't want to go out there again. You can appreciate the position Peter is in here. He wants to spare his men, but he also wants to honor Jesus. So Peter tries to protest, tries to bring the voice of experience into the situation, if not for himself, then at least, certainly, for his crew.

Look what he says in verse 5, "Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets.'" In a way, you've got to credit Peter here, he's kind of come up with a compromise. He says, We, collectively. Look at all of us on this boat, we're tired, we toiled all night. Lord, Peter says to the Master, then he says, "I will let down the nets." Not we, I will. He and his men have endured a long night of fruitless labor, they're tired, they're exhausted, they're probably discouraged.

Peter's a good man, he's a hard worker, he's a good boss, he didn't want his men to suffer any more disappointment, adding insult to injury, especially from what seems to be the rather silly ambition of catching fish like this. I mean, what does a carpenter know about fishing? So Peter says, you want us to let down the nets, look, because it's you, Master, that's a term of respect and authority, by the way, master. The word master, *epistata*, it refers to the one in charge, like on a job site, like the one who's running the crew. This is the boss, this is the sup, the jefe, head honcho, so he says, at your word, boss man, I'll take care of this myself. I will let down the nets.

Clearly, he didn't want to do it either. He didn't think they were going to find fish, in fact, he knew they aren't going to find fish. He's probably wondering already how he's going to reel all those nets back in by himself, I mean, he'll cast them in, but he's going to need some help to bring them back. And then he's thinking about getting back to land and the unhappy prospect of spending the rest of the day washing the nets yet again once they returned to shore.

It's a mark of virtue, here, that Peter planned to take one for the team. But his crew jumped in to help here. They deployed the nets. Look what happened, verse 6, "When they had done this, they enclosed," as you know, "a large number of fish." Huh, how about that? There are fish out here! So much so that their nets were breaking and so much so that they had to signal their partners in the other boat that's on the shore to come and help. And they came and filled both the boats so that they begin to sink.

You know what they just learned? Jesus knows where the fish are. And look, this is either an instance of remarkable providence, combined with divine omniscience that Jesus knew exactly when to give the command, where in the lake the fish were at that particular time, or this is a miracle of the divine will with Jesus directing these creatures to swim to that location at that time and get right into the nets. Down go the nets and just as Jesus had commanded a demon, just as he had commanded a fever, now he commands a massive school of fish.

One commentator noted, he says this, quote, "The density of the shoals of fish in the Lake of Galilee can scarcely be conceived by those who have not witnessed them. They sometimes cover an acre or more on the surface in one dense mass." End quote. Now, I haven't been there, but I take his word for it. And Jesus just directed an entire acre of fish into their nets. No wonder the nets are breaking! No wonder they are breaking, Simon and his crew, they signal to the other boat that's near the shore. They get out there as soon as they can to help, but it's gonna take some time to get a boat out to where they are, right? And so, that's interesting because Jesus not only directed the fish to their nets, but now he keeps them swimming around, confused, encircling, long enough for the other help to arrive.

The partners in the other boat come to help. Now both boats are filled with fish. They're so full that both boats begin to sink, after nothing the night before, now this bumper crop. I'm not sure what the market price of tilapia, that's St. Peter's fish, which is commonly swims there, not, not sure what the market price was for that moment, but no doubt this crew went

from surly and grumpy to ecstatic. I mean amazed, overjoyed, they forgot their tiredness.

I mean I, frankly folks, I can't stand fishing. I don't have the patience for it, throwing a line in the water and waiting. I don't know where the fish are. If I knew where they were, I'd just go shoot 'em and take them home. But I could get into this kind of fishing. Even I could love that! And these guys are excited, they're grabbing everything they can get and just keep packing 'em in, in the hold, on the deck, extra nets, throwing 'em out, scooping 'em up, loading 'em up, incredible miracle, right?

But get this, it's one thing for us non-fishermen to hear about this, but it's another thing for fishermen to hear this. This is a targeted miracle. This is an orchestrated miracle. Think about this, when Peter complained, "Master, we toiled all night and caught nothing." You can almost imagine a wry smile forming on Jesus' face, like I know. Heh, heh, heh. It was no accident! He gave them a frustrating night of fishing on purpose.

Folks, you ever seen something frustrating in your own life and you wonder, why? God's got a reason. Here, Jesus is getting them ready for this miracle, a miracle that only fishermen could understand and fully appreciate. Fishermen know what it's like to have a bad night and what it's like to have a great night. I mean, not many people here in Colorado are making their living off of fishing. And so to have a bad night of fishing for these men meant no food on the table.

They also knew what it was like to have a really good night of fishing. They knew what it was like to have a great night of fishing. These guys had never seen anything like this, not ever! And they would never have a day like this again of fishing. No doubt some of the men were making plans for the next day; they're throwing out a buoy, they want to mark that spot. They're going to come out at the same time, same location, try the same spot the next morning. Maybe they needed to reconsider the profitability of deep-water fishing for themselves, right, get into a whole different trade. No doubt that this miracle here made a mark on the hired men.

But the real impact, where Jesus was aiming, is at his disciples and their hearts, particularly the profound effect it had on Peter, because this penetrated him deeply. Look at verse 8, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."

Everyone was astonished at the catch of fish, but it went deeper for Simon Peter. Jesus had seen through the deep waters, through the murky depths, all the way to where the fish were, and he'd seen into the depths of Peter's murky soul. Peter is stricken, here, he's flayed open. He's mortified. He couldn't stand to have Jesus near him at this particular moment. Why? Why did Simon Peter react this way? In what way had he sinned? By working? Certainly not. Hadn't he, in effect, obeyed Jesus' command? Hadn't he let down the nets at his command? Didn't he ultimately do what Jesus said?

We could fault Peter for a number of things, right? But not unsympathetically. We can certainly see a number of ways that he erred. We can see that along with his brother Andrew and along with his partners, James and John, that Peter had failed to understand the extent, the depth, the seriousness of Jesus' call to discipleship. Have you ever been guilty of that? I have. They followed Jesus immediately, but they hadn't stayed with him.

Not only that, but at this moment, Simon had doubted Jesus. He judged him wrongly. He failed to believe him. He hesitated in his obedience. He didn't do whatever Jesus said to do. Again, you ever, you ever done that? He stuttered in his obedience. He realized, then and there, that he had no excuse whatsoever. Why? Because he was there, at the synagogue, when Jesus had commanded the demon and the demon had fled. Simon was there, in his own home, when Jesus commanded the fever and healed his wife's mother; she was completely and immediately restored. Simon was there, when all the townspeople of Capernaum showed up at his doorstep seeking healing of every imaginable disease, and he had healed them all.

There's no good reason to dismiss Jesus, one who could heal immediately and completely. When he calls to discipleship, you leave immediately, and you leave completely. There's no good reason to dismiss Jesus, no good reason to doubt him, no good reason to hesitate for one second to obey his every word. Jesus has dominion over all the works of God's hand, all things are under his feet, as this shows. All sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the heaven, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes in the paths of the seas. Peter did not realize the extent of Jesus' experience in all things. He had wrongly remanded Jesus' authority to spiritual matters only.

We can all do that, can't we? We can tend to compartmentalize the reach of God's Word. It's as if what Jesus says, what he commands, what the Bible says, he can say whatever he wants when we're here at church. But out in the real world, in the fishing boat, That's my domain, that's where I'm the expert, and the Word of the living God does not extend to my area of expertise.

Listen, we all need to understand along with Peter that if he's Lord at all, he is Lord of all. There is no place on earth, there is no place in the universe that is outside of his dominion, that is not under the absolute authority of his sovereign control. He is sovereign over all, and that includes our minds and our hearts as well, beloved. That includes our, our thought-life, that includes the things we imagine, that includes our plans and ambitions, that includes God's design for our homes, for our marriage, for our parenting.

You know what? It includes God's direction for how we work in the world, and when we take a break from work, to pay attention, to be devoted to the Lord's Word on his day. It controls how we work for our employers and how we will not work for our employers. It controls how we treat our employees, and how we will never treat our employees. He has command of it all. He has command of every single detail. And when you embrace that, then you know that the good news of the Kingdom of God has come to you, too.

Look, can he take care of your financial needs if you devote time to him? Well, he could direct a whole acre of fish into the nets of these fishermen, can he not take care of you and your needs as well, "O ye of little faith"? We all need to hear that, don't we?

There's still a more fundamental reason Simon Peter said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It's subtle, but it's clear. Simon had called Jesus, Master, boss man, jefe, head honcho, big cheese. But now Peter is seeing him in quite a different light. Now he calls him Lord and it was tearing him apart inside.

As one commentator noted, "it's the master whose orders must be obeyed, but it is the Lord whose holiness causes moral agony to the sinner" or in the terms that R. C. Sproul used, this is called the "trauma of holiness."

Some people have noticed the parallels that exist between the commissioning of Peter and the commissioning of Isaiah. If you would, turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah, chapter 6, Isaiah

chapter 6. Like Peter, Isaiah also encountered the presence of holiness, and it traumatized him to the core of his being. It says there in Isaiah 6:1-5, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew."

In this incredible scene of glory, of unparalleled majesty before the very throne of God, and it feels like a place where no mortal should ever dare to tread, and here's Isaiah chunked into the middle of it, thrust into the room, watching these seraphim, literally, the term means burning ones, and they're flying about with energy. But in the appropriate creaturely recognition of their creatureliness, they're covering their eyes, and they're covering their feet in the presence of a holy God.

And one calls to another, it says there, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! And"

the thresholds, "the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke."

Isaiah's senses here are overloaded, his body is quaking along with the foundations. His mind is reverberating with the, the dreadful refrain of that voice, "Holy, holy, holy." His heart, here, is virtually turned to wax, melting within him as he says, "Woe is me! For I'm undone! I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

He's coming apart here, in the very presence of the holiness of God. He, here, comes to a terrifying realization that he stands before this awesome holiness as a sinner from the land of sinners unable to speak along with that angelic testimony, "Holy, holy, holy," because he doesn't dare utter those words from his unclean lips. It's devastatingly clear to him that he does not belong here. Yet what did God do? Restored him.

Folks, that's what Simon Peter was realizing at this very moment on his own fishing vessel, bowed at the knees of Jesus. Go ahead and turn back to Luke 5. He's there in Luke 5:8, bowing on his knees, and he says, "Depart from me," Your holiness doesn't belong anywhere near me, it's not appropriate, "I'm a sinful man, O Lord." What does the Lord do? Yeah, you're right, Peter, grovel, wiggle like a worm on the deck.

He's so good. Just as he did with Isaiah, purifying him and commissioning him for service, Jesus does the same thing here with Peter. He reassures him. He issues the call to discipleship, I should say he reissues it. Like all true disciples, Simon had to learn here the real meaning of discipleship, he had to listen whenever Jesus teaches, he had to do whatever Jesus says.

The third point, the real meaning of discipleship, third point, he had to learn to follow wherever Jesus leads. Look at verse 10, "Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.'" Do not be afraid, that's the reassurance. You will now be catching men from now on, that's

the commissioning, the repurposing of Simon's entire life. The entire direction of his life just changed. Leave the fish behind.

In fact, the term here for catching men, it specifically refers to catching them alive, and then after capturing them, it refers to repurposing them to be used for a different purpose, used for a different end. The word used, it was often used of capturing men in battle, and instead of killing them, it was about sparing their lives, not letting them rot in prison, but actually re-educating them, putting them into a different use.

It's not unlike what Nebuchadnezzar tried to do and accomplish with Daniel. He captured him alive, he took him to Babylon, he had hoped to indoctrinate him in the learning of the Chaldeans, to put him to use for the good of the kingdom of Babylon, and that's what, in fact, happened. That's what Jesus intended to use Peter for, as well. In fact, it's what he had just done. He captured him alive, and he repurposed him. This carpenter from Nazareth had proved to be very effective at fishing for men, hadn't he?

He's an expert fisherman, turns out, not just with fish, though. He was fishing for men, and he intended to use Peter in the same way. Notice here, Jesus didn't give Peter an option. It's not, I want to honor your sovereignty, Peter, over your life. Um, I, I realize you kind of have an Arminian bend toward theology, and I need to honor your sovereign will. So I wouldn't want to impose myself on you. No. Jesus doesn't say that. He doesn't say, would you like to join me in capturing men? Would you like to consider this in your set of options? Fish on the lake, have a great life, or join me in capturing people? No, it's "from now on," not you might be but "you will be capturing men." Wonder of all wonders that he would choose people like us, right?

Jesus is saying here, Peter, though you are a sinful man, you are my prize, I've captured you in this battle. A prize for the victory of the war that I will soon win. And as my trophy, you are my chosen instrument, I'm reeducating you, I'm indoctrinating you into my teaching, I'm bringing you close, disciplining you in my ways. I want you to understand my mind, my thinking. No longer do I call you slaves, now I call you a

friend. I'm redirecting your entire life, I'm repurposing you to have real effect to extend my work of capturing souls for the kingdom, to win people, to win all of those whom God has given to me.

What else is there? Is there a better use of your life but to follow wherever Jesus leads? Take a look at verse 11, "When they had brought their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him." Even though Jesus addressed Peter directly, in the singular, the other disciples joined him in this call to discipleship. It's very likely that they remembered that earlier call. They were all stricken, but when Jesus said, "Follow me," they had, like Peter they had failed to do so completely. They had done so immediately, but not wholly, not fully, not forever.

So arriving at the shore, they docked the boats, tied off, walked away. No indication here that they unloaded the fish. No indication that they took this large catch to market and said, hey, I've got a great idea, we can fund this whole enterprise, we just sell these fish. We can live high, stay in the Ritz, go out, preach the Gospel, and come back and have a great hotel

room; you know those nice, fluffy towels, awesome. A little steam bath?

No, nothing. No indication that they watched, washed their nets again. No indication that they mended their torn nets, helped out with any of the many tasks that needed to be done. They just clearly had no intention of fishing the next day. They left it all behind. They followed Jesus. They finally got the message, right?

Discipleship means listening whenever Jesus teaches. It means doing whatever Jesus says. It means following wherever he leads. They needed to learn that, again and again. We need to understand that as well. Listen whenever Jesus teaches, do whatever Jesus says. Follow wherever he leads. Will you do that today?

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for such a profound call in the Scripture here of these first disciples. It's so instructive to us living two millennia from this time period, so relevant to us, so convicting. Even to be in your very presence. Were it not for your salvation and your

redemption, we would be like Isaiah, we would be like Peter, undone, saying, "Woe is me," saying "Depart from me, a sinful man." And yet, you have removed the stain of our guilt in Jesus. You've given to him, him to us as a sacrifice to satisfy your holy wrath, your just condemnation for our sin. You've removed any offense.

No longer do you call us enemies, but you call us friends, you bring us close. You raise us up from our knees, and you embrace us, and then you turn us around and send us into accomplishing your will. We're humbled as we hear about this and what can we do, but we say, "Here am I, Lord, send me."