

You Must Change Your Life

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Again, my name is Kevin. I'm one of the pastors here. It is great to be worshipping with morning. I don't know about you, but it's already felt like an amazing worship service. I love when the band does the singing refrains.

I feel like maybe I don't need to preach this morning, but actually I do think the Lord has something to say to us still. One of the things that I like to do as I preach, before I preach, is to give us a moment of silence.

I don't know what you're coming in with this morning. I don't know how you slept last night. I didn't sleep terribly well. Maybe you had a really hard week. Maybe you're distracted with loads of things from the past week or what you have to do this upcoming week.

So I want to give us a moment of silence to put those things to rest for a moment to prepare our hearts and our minds to receive from the Lord. So let's take a moment of silence together.

Lord, you are an amazing God that is worthy to be worshiped.

[1 : 2 5] Thank you that you speak to us. Pray that you would speak to us even now. We ask that you would speak for your servants who are listening. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Now, one of my favorite things to do is to witness masters doing their thing. Masters are people who are at the top of their field.

They're the people who make amazing supernatural feats look like the most natural thing in the world. They make a four-minute mile look like a walk in the park. And we know that behind these superhuman acts, there are thousands of hours of practice, 10,000 hours if you ask Malcolm Gladwell, of putting in the unsexy work, of grinding it out on scales and drills and rehearsals, all aimed at mastering themselves and mastering their craft.

There are so many sacrifices, so many deaths devoted to bringing something truly amazing to life. Maybe it's a song. Maybe it's a book. Maybe it's an idea. Maybe it's the perfect shot.

Some of my favorite people, some of the masters that I look up to and am inspired by, that I've gotten to see personally, are Yo-Yo Ma playing Bach on cello, or Marilynne Robinson, my favorite novelist, giving a lecture on beauty and grace, or Kevin Garnett, my favorite basketball player of all time, competing on the basketball court.

[2 : 5 4] These were all profound experiences. They were powerful. Seeing them called me to something beyond myself. I don't know if you've ever experienced something like this.

It's hard to describe. Describing it is a bit like telling somebody what it feels like to fall in love. But a theologian by the name of Hans Urs von Balthasar, a 20th century theologian, he puts it this way.

He gives great words to describe this. He says, When a person is truly struck by something, something truly significant, an arrow pierces his heart at his most personal level, the issue is one that concerns him.

You must change your life. You must henceforth live in response to this unique and genuine revelation. The man to whom this has happened is marked for life.

He has trodden holy ground that is in the world but not of it. He cannot return to the purely worldly world. He bears the brand mark of his encounter with beauty.

[4 : 03] An encounter like this is transformative. It pierces you. It burns you. It leaves a mark, a kind of holy wound. And it requires something of you. It calls you to something more.

With this kind of encounter in mind, I want to look at the interaction between Jesus and Peter that we just read together in Luke chapter 5. Here we see Peter encounters Jesus, the master, and it begins to change everything for him.

And so this morning, with our time together, we're going to explore one question, a simple one. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? And we'll see that it means four things. It means that we're chosen by Jesus, that we're confronted by Jesus, that we're commissioned by Jesus, and then we are committed to Jesus.

So those four things, chosen, confronted, commissioned, and committed. Now last week, Pastor Dan walked us through the latter half of chapter 4 in the Gospel of Luke.

It was an amazing sermon. We saw the power and the authority of Jesus' words, and we saw Jesus' heartbreaking compassion for those who are suffering. The news about Jesus was spreading.

[5 : 15] His ministry was no longer contained to the cramped walls of the synagogue, but it spilled out into Simon Peter's house, and then into the countryside. Jesus is like an artist who's been discovered.

He was playing in smaller venues, but now he needs a stadium. And this is where our story picks up in chapter 5. We find Jesus standing along the lake of Gennesaret, just another name for the Sea of Galilee, just to the southwest of Capernaum where he was formerly.

And there was a crowd of people pressing in on him to hear the word of God. Jesus has a following now, but he also has a problem. The people are clamoring to hear him teach. They're clamoring to hear his words, but the crowd was too large and his voice couldn't carry.

And so he hops into a boat, goes out into the water, and turns around and teaches them. He converts this small cove into a natural amphitheater where his voice would carry, and everyone could hear what he had to say.

And as all of this is happening, we begin to see the very first aspect of discipleship, to be chosen by Jesus. We see this in verse 2. It's a very small detail, but it's an important detail.

[6 : 21] There are two boats by the lake. When you see something like this, it's good to ask, why does it mention that there are two boats? Well, first I think it is clear that there are two boats to foreshadow the miracle that is about to happen.

There are going to catch so many fish that they need two boats to haul them in. But there's another reason why the two boats are listed. I think it's to show that Jesus chooses Peter's boat and not the other boat.

It's not an accident that Jesus happened to get into Peter's boat. You see, Jesus already knew Peter. We saw in chapter 4 that he was in Simon Peter's house, and he healed Simon's mother-in-law.

And then he stays at the house, and people bring all the sick, the demon-possessed, to Peter's house. And this becomes the staging ground for an all-night-long healing vigil in verse 40 of chapter 4.

So Jesus knows Peter, and he sees the two boats, and he sees Peter over there washing his nets, and he calls Peter, and he gets into Peter's boat, chooses Peter and his boat, and Peter hops in and steers the boat out for Jesus.

[7 : 29] Now, why did Jesus pick Peter? I think he must have noticed something special about Peter. Maybe it was that Peter was a natural leader. Maybe he saw that he was a man of conviction, a man of passion.

The story doesn't give us those details. Surely Jesus loved Peter, but I don't think he picked Peter because he was perfect.

Just keep reading the Gospels. You'll see how imperfect Peter was. I think he picked Peter because Peter had potential. He was a sturdy block of marble from which Jesus could chisel a glorious statue.

And so it is with all of his disciples. Now, as we talk about being chosen, also the language of election, this can be a controversial topic, and so I want to address a couple common misunderstandings when people talk about being chosen by God.

The first thing I want to address, or the first thing I want to say, is that Jesus does not choose his disciples because they're so great. Jesus doesn't choose us because we are great.

[8 : 34] We see this pattern in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 7 when God is explaining to Israel why he chose them, lest they have a sense of mere moral superiority.

Jesus says, or the Lord says to Israel, it wasn't because you're so strong and powerful that I chose you. Actually, you are the fewest in number. I chose you, Israel, because you are weak and vulnerable, and I want to do something great with you.

We see this in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth. He says this, For consider your calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards.

Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

[9 : 39] Here's one way I like to think about it. Imagine Jesus is a team captain, and he's selecting a group of players for his team for a game of pickup basketball. Rather than pick the obvious choices, the six foot six guy, the person who has a 32 inch vertical leap, the guy who actually can shoot the ball, what Jesus does is he picks the short fat kid with Rexbecks, me in middle school.

He picks the kid who can't dribble and has never played basketball before. He picks the guy with two left feet who's wearing flip flops. Jesus picks the losers for his team, the ones who are normally picked last in the games of pickup basketball.

And we see this in choosing his disciples. You see, Jesus is planning a revolution. He's trying to change the world. If I were in Jesus's shoes, I would have picked a different group of people. I would have gone straight for the influencers, the Pharisees, the scribes, the people, the warriors who are organized in militias, but Jesus chooses a fisherman from the country.

And the point is this. God does not choose us. God doesn't choose his disciples because they're great. He chooses us to do something great with us to demonstrate his greatness.

There is no room for moral superiority in the life of a disciple for one who's been chosen by Jesus. And the second thing is this. Jesus doesn't choose his disciples primarily instead of other people.

[11 : 03] He chooses his disciples for the sake of other people. We see this in the Old Testament once again. God chooses Abraham to bless the whole world. God chooses Israel not instead of all the other nations, but to be a light to the nations.

God chose Peter. He chooses you and he chooses me, not instead of all those other people, but for the sake of all of those other people, so that we might be used by God to reach them.

William Temple, former Archbishop of Canterbury, says this. He says, the church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members. The church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.

And the church goes wrong when it forgets this. So that's the first thing. To be a disciple means to be chosen by Jesus, to be picked by Jesus. And the second thing is that we are then confronted by Jesus.

And there's a progression here. We're chosen in order to be confronted. To be a disciple requires that we be confronted with the truth of Jesus and of ourselves.

[12 : 08] And this is the real heart of our passage. This is the real heart of Luke chapter five. Let's look at how Jesus confronts Simon Peter. In verse four, we read this.

When Jesus had finished speaking to the crowds, he turned to Peter. And he says this. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And so the first thing we see is that Jesus is challenging Peter's competence at fishing.

Now what Jesus says might sound like a smart move, but it's actually really terrible advice. Jesus was not a fishing master. We need to understand that. For those of us who are unaccustomed to the best practices of fishing in first century Galilee, there's a few things that you need to know.

The first thing is this. Nobody fished with nets during the day. The nets that they used were called trammel nets, and they were made of thick linen ropes that fish could see in the water during the day.

So they would swim away from them. They would be completely useless, ineffective during the day, but they were really effective at night. The other thing that you need to know is that fishermen knew the best places to fish because they were fishermen.

[13 : 17] That was their job. They knew that you don't find the fish in the deep, but near the shore where the streams flow into the lake. Now, knowing these things, knowing this, we can see that this is actually a really hilarious scene.

Jesus is actually pretty funny. Jesus says, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. It's advice only a landlubber would give. And Simon answers, just think what would have been going on in his mind knowing all the things Jesus was telling him to do were just bad, were wrong.

He says, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word, I'll let down my nets again. It's like Jesus is trolling Peter. He's like setting him up.

Imagine what would have been going on in Peter's mind. Imagine the look on Peter's face in the boat. He's tired from fishing all night. He's probably hungry. He's mad.

He didn't catch anything. He wasted a whole evening. And he just finished washing his nets. And then Jesus, who likely knows very, very little about fishing, tells him to get back out there with those clean nets.

[14 : 24] It's how I imagine it would be something like this. Imagine spending three hours in your backyard trying to figure out what's wrong with your gas lawnmower. You've taken it apart, trying to figure out why it's not working.

And then your neighbor, the one on the left side of your house, who hires a professional landscaper, comes over with an extension cord and asks if you tried plugging it in. It is a ridiculous scene, but that's kind of the point.

All of this is to set up the miracle, and the miracle is to set up the real confrontation. Peter is confronted by the truth of Jesus and of himself. And Peter obeys Jesus' bad fishing advice, and then he catches more fish than he's ever seen.

We're talking hundreds of fish, enough to sink two boats. It's the haul of a lifetime. And Peter's response, at least to me, is the most surprising thing about this passage.

It contrasts very sharply with everybody else up until this point in the Gospels. The crowds that Jesus ministers to can't get enough of him, and they want to keep him for themselves.

[15 : 27] But Peter, unlike the crowds, really sees Jesus. And his response is not to cling to Jesus, but to recoil from him. In verse 8, when Simon Peter saw this miracle, all the fish, he collapses.

He falls down at Jesus' knees, and he says, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. So what's going on with Peter's response? Well, the days leading up to this, Peter was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.

He heard his powerful teaching. He saw his miracles. And he saw it up close, in the synagogue, in his own home, with his mother-in-law. But what happened on the boat was different.

It was more personal. What happened on the boat was for him. And Peter couldn't handle it. He saw that Jesus was not just a master teacher with new ideas, not just a wonder worker, certainly not the world's best tilapia fisherman.

He's a human being like no other. Jesus is the master. He's the Lord. And it's clear, I think, that Luke wants us to see a connection to Isaiah 6 here, when Isaiah was in the throne room of God, a passage we read a few moments ago.

[16 : 38] Before the presence of the Holy One, Isaiah says, Woe is me, for I am lost. I am a man of unclean lips. And Peter, not in the throne room of God, but on a boat in the Sea of Galilee, finds himself before Jesus, the Holy One.

And he says, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Now, I don't think Peter had a comprehensive Christology here. I don't think he understands Jesus fully, what it means for him to be fully God and fully man.

But he has seen enough to know that Jesus is no mere mortal. Peter is like a man coming out of a dark cave, and he's confronted with the brilliance of the sun for the very first time.

Lightning has struck his eyes. He catches a quick glimpse before having to shut them, and he doesn't have to see everything clearly to realize that he was formerly in the dark, and now he is in the light.

He's struck by the revelation of Jesus Christ. This man, this Jesus, is the one. He is the answer to all my questions, many of which I didn't even know that I had before meeting him.

[17 : 43] This man is the hope that I've always longed for, but could never quite articulate. His love is the love that I've always craved.

His touch is the touch that I've always wanted. His life is the life I always desired, but could never quite attain. And so on that boat, in front of all of those crowds, the veil is removed.

Peter sees Jesus face to face, and he realizes that he is utterly inadequate, that he is utterly unworthy, that he is a sinful man.

Now, to be a disciple requires that we come in contact with Jesus in this way, and that we be confronted with this reality about who Jesus is and who we are.

I can't beat how Tim Keller puts it. He says, he describes the reality like this. We need to be confronted with this. We are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe, but at the same time, more accepted and loved than we ever dared dreamed.

[18 : 50] Peter finds himself naked before the Lord. He is absolutely exposed and absolutely loved. And it is a confrontation. It's part judgment, but it's all grace.

In the confrontation, he hears this call. You must change your life. Notice this isn't an argument. He's not argued into being a disciple. It's an encounter with Jesus.

This brings us to the third aspect of discipleship, what it means to be a disciple. Again, Balthazar puts it beautifully. He says, this encounter, this confrontation leads to something else.

He writes this, we only see God by being wrapped, by being transported towards him, by being transformed. No one is enraptured without returning from this encounter without a personal mission.

God only shows himself to someone, only enraptures him in order to commission him. Disciples are chosen, we're confronted, in order to be commissioned by Jesus.

[19 : 57] So Peter tells Jesus to leave and Jesus almost disregards it, classic Jesus move. In verse 10, he says, do not be afraid. From now on, you will be catching people.

Despite our unworthiness, Jesus dignifies disciples. He dignifies us by inviting us to partner with him in his mission to gather all peoples to himself.

From now on, this is a clear break from the past. You used to devote your time, you used to devote your time and your energy to this other thing, and now you're going to be devoting it to something else.

So what is this? It's the mission of catching people. Now, this is a really interesting image when we consider how Peter fished. Remember, he fished at night, effectively tricking the fish.

to go into his nets. They end up dying and being sold and then eaten. Clearly, I don't think Jesus is saying, Peter, you should trick people into following Jesus so they'll die and we can sell them and we can eat them.

[20 : 58] The Bible is true, but we're not supposed to interpret literalistically. He's using a powerful metaphor because he's commissioning a career fisher. But it is an important image, one that applies to all of us, and I want to help us understand it a little bit by telling a story.

So 12 years or so ago when I was in seminary in Boston at Gordon-Conwell, Susan and I were young and in love, newly married. We didn't have a lot of money and we found a unique housing situation.

It was called a live-in. The deal was I would do work around an estate in exchange for rent. 10 hours of work, didn't have to pay rent. It was really an amazing deal. I chopped quite a bit of wood, so if you ever need wood chopping, give me a call.

I like doing it. But mostly what I did was landscaping work and I wasn't particularly good at it, but, you know, that's what I did. And in this estate, they had this beautiful spring-fed pond.

It was pretty big, about the size of a baseball diamond. In the pond, there were turtles and frogs and fish. And one spring, we had a nor'easter, it was a pretty common thing up there, that flooded the pond.

[22 : 10] And I looked outside of my window and I saw the estate. It looked like a tornado had gone through it. There was just branches and trees and water everywhere. So I went out into the grounds to get my 10 hours of work in and I discovered that there were puddles all over the estate.

Some big puddles, some small puddles. And as I got closer, I realized that the puddles were full of fish all over the property. Somehow in the nor'easter, they were swept out of the pond and they were just spread out all over the property.

The fish had no idea that they were in grave danger, but they were. They weren't going to last long there. And so I grabbed the little nets that you use to catch tadpoles and the little buckets you use to make sand cows with.

And I proceeded to spend the morning rescuing all of those fish. I caught them, put them in the little bucket and then deposited back into the pond. I don't know how many that I rescued, dozens of them.

And I felt like an absolute hero that day. I like to think about in my bad days all of the generations of fish that survived, that live on because of my work. In a sense, I was fishing.

[23 : 13] I was rescuing those fish, putting them back where they belonged. And I think this is exactly what Jesus has in mind for Peter when he says, you'll be catching people. The verb catching literally means to capture alive.

It means to rescue. Just like what happened in that property 12 years ago, in our world a terrible storm has happened. And the world is a mess and people are in grave danger. They're living in muddy puddles but they're meant for this beautiful spring-fed pond.

And so Jesus commissions his people to be fishermen, used by God to help deliver people from the domain of darkness as Paul puts it, and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved son.

This is what it means to be a fisher of humans. And it's amazing. We're not just saved by Jesus but we're invited to partner with him. So to be a disciple means to be chosen, to be confronted, and to be commissioned.

And lastly, it means to be committed to Jesus. The first three things you'll notice focus on Jesus' initiative. The last one focuses on our response.

[24 : 17] So to be a disciple means to be committed to Jesus. And Peter models this for us in an amazing way. He follows Jesus in a truly radical way.

He left behind a massive haul, an amazing amount of wealth, more wealth than he's probably ever seen in his life, to commit his way to Jesus. This is what it looks like to repent and to believe, to turn away from his old way of life and to begin a new one radically committed to, radically yoked to Jesus.

So what does it mean for us? What does it mean to be committed to Jesus? It's radical, but it's not rocket science. It means this, very simply. To be committed to Jesus means saying yes.

Saying yes to Jesus is not a one-time thing. It's not just a thing you do at summer camp back in high school. It's a thing that we do every day, every hour, every moment.

The two most important words for a disciple is yes, Lord. How many times did you say that to the Lord last week? When God calls us, the only responsibility that a disciple has is to say yes.

[25 : 28] And God's on the hook for what happens next. We are to say yes and leave the consequences to him. Now, I said it is radical, but it's not rocket science.

It's pretty hard to do this. I don't know if that's true for you. If you're anything like me, you're very gifted at nuancing your way out of full commitments. When God prompts, it's very easy for me to justify delaying obedience or outright disobeying him.

What the heart desires, the will chooses, and the mind justifies. That Anglican maxim often describes my life. This is how I think it plays out in our heads. Surely God could not be calling me to invite my neighbor or my colleague to church.

He should know as well as anyone that they have no interest whatsoever in doing this kind of thing. They might even get offended by it. Surely God could not be calling me to give that much money away to that cause, to that person.

God wants me to be fiscally responsible and to save for my kids' college. Surely God could not be calling me to switch careers. He knows how much money I spent on grad school and how many hours I put in to get here.

[26 : 40] Surely God could not be calling me to confront my friend about her destructive pattern of behavior again. God knows that they would reject me and he knows how much they need me as a friend.

But surely God is calling you to something right now. Maybe it's to forgive someone. Maybe it's to ask for forgiveness. Maybe it's to confess a sin that's been plaguing you that nobody knows about.

Maybe it's to share the gospel with somebody. Maybe it's to believe the gospel for yourself. Now, I've lost track of my, I was getting into it there.

Lost track of my notes. It's great, right? Okay. So if you're like me, there are things that you suspect, there are things that you actually know that God is calling to you.

He probably was telling you as I was going through those things. God is calling you to say yes to something and you've delayed. But I want you to hear this. Do that thing.

[27 : 49] Commit to doing it. Take the risk to say yes and leave the consequences to God. You can trust him. Here's the deal. I'm paraphrasing Richard Foster, one of my spiritual heroes.

At the end of the day, what this world needs is not more smart people or more gifted people. The desperate need of the world, the desperate need of this city is deep people.

People who are radically committed to following Jesus, people who are quick to say yes. And this commitment is not a sprint. It is, to borrow a phrase from Nietzsche, a long obedience in the same direction.

Of developing the habit of saying yes over and over and over and over again along the way. Discipleship is a commitment to a kind of mastery. It's a long obedience like learning a skill, only the skill that we're learning is how to become fully human beings.

And after 10,000 hours of practice, of being mastered by Jesus and doing the spirit-filled work of saying yes to Jesus over and over again, after 10,000 hours of doing that, living out the supernatural life of Christ will become the most natural thing.

[29 : 03] let's pray. Lord, you do speak to us. You have been speaking to us. There are things that you're calling us to say yes to.

Lord, help us to trust you. Help us to have faith to say yes and to trust the consequences to you. We pray these things in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.