

Launch out into the deep

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2008

[0 : 00] I've read it before. It tells us the story of the fishermen. They were there washing their nets. The Lord is being mobbed by the people.

! And he pushes the boat out into the lake and the crowds flock to hear the word of God. And after that the Lord speaks to Simon in verse 4 of Luke 5.

And when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes and their net broke. What a story! What a picture of God's wonderful intervention.

Our Lord teaches a fishing lesson here. A fishing lesson. And here was Peter, the expert fisherman. If there was a book to write on how to fish, Peter would have written it. He was an expert fisherman. He knew everything there was to know about fishing.

[1 : 35] He had a lifetime of experience, of know-how, of knowledge, of equipment. And he had years of practice. And he said unto him, Launch out into the deep.

Friends, I want us, each one of us individually, as well as corporately as God's church in this place, to be encouraged today.

To launch out into the deep. To launch out. To look forward to the future with faith, with anticipation, with expectation, with confidence in our God.

Launch out! This was not something Peter wanted to hear. What do you mean? Would it have been his reasoning, his thinking likely? It's time to quit! It's time to quit! We've been toying all the night. We've been at it all night.

And taken nothing. Nothing at all. They had battled on overnight. And they had only met with defeat. They had worked hard. And their works had amounted to a great big zero.

[2 : 49] They had seen nothing. For all their labours. For all their work. But God was just about to start. When we're about to quit, God's about to start. God's about to start doing something.

And God wants us to depend upon Him. To depend upon Him. Imagine being there that day. I'd imagine that Peter would have just wanted to grumble and go home and have a sleep.

You know, He'd been working the night shift. After all, toiling all the night. He'd have been worn out. Absolutely worn out. With nothing to show for all that hard work. Not even one fish. Not even one.

It wasn't comfortable to go back out there. It wasn't easy for Him to go back out there and start fishing again. After all that hard work. He didn't feel like it. And He didn't want to.

And as a church, we get like that too. I'm sure as a church. And as individuals, we just want to pack the bags and pack it in. But as a church, our only limit is the extent of our fame.

[4 : 03] Do we stay in the shallows? Do we stay in defeat and disappointment? Or do we hear God as He urges us to launch out into the deep?

We've got to go deeper. We've got to go further, stronger. Are you ready to go deeper? Are you ready to launch out into the deep? To leave the shallows? To leave the coastline? To launch out beyond? To go further in faith than you've travelled before?

Or is there something holding you back? Could it be that fear is holding you back? The fear of the unknown. The fear. Or self-doubt. You just don't feel like you've got what it takes.

Could it be really a lack of faith? A lack of faith. They had exhausted time, energy, expenditure of so much effort.

They were just ready to go home and have a snooze really, weren't they? Having toiled all night. I don't know. I used to shift work at one time. You just want to go and have a snooze after a day's work, especially if it's a funny time of night.

[5 : 13] And they were tired out. There was nothing to show for all that they had done. Everything that they had done seemed like it was a waste of time. And yet, our Lord, He doesn't mollycoddle

Peter. He just says, Get out there, Peter. Launch out into the deep again.

It's a bit like there's a famous speech by Winston Churchill in 1940. I wasn't there to hear it. But I don't know. Some of you might have heard it.

But it's a famous speech that he gave. And amongst some of what he said, I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.

But he said, the aim is victory. The aim is victory. He said, there's going to be suffering, but our aim is victory. And it's a bit like that really sometimes with the Christian life that there's blood, toil, tears and sweat.

There's work. There's a launching out into the deep. There's a going out there when you don't really feel like it sometimes. And our God says to you, take up your cross and follow.

[6 : 18] It's not something that's pleasant or comfortable or easy sometimes. He doesn't offer you a hammock. He offers you a cross. A cross to carry. And that, we know, crosses are uncomfortable things.

We're not talking about a little one around your neck. We're talking about a great big heavy one on your shoulder. That's what he's talking about. A rough one. A heavy one. A bulky, uncomfortable, awkward one.

And he wants you to take up your cross and carry it. And he doesn't say, there, there now, to Peter. He says, get out there. This is a time for action, for commitment, for resolve, for decision.

He says, launch out into the deep. And, you know, thinking back as a church over our history, we've seen many folk come and go. We've seen blessings and disappointments. We've seen discouragements and defeats.

But we've seen victories. We've seen blessings. And launch out into the deep. It kind of speaks to me of an adventure of faith. And as we look back at our church and where we've come from, where we've been, where we've gone, we think of this very building.

[7 : 25] It had really nothing to offer. It was fit to be bulldozed, really. And people would have, you know, nobody seemed interested in it. It was too much work, too much effort to, you know, a great big swimming pool in the middle of it.

It had to be, you know, there was no way it was a functional building for anything that anyone could see. But we could see the potential. We could see the potential.

We could see what it could become. What it could be made into. How it could be a suitable meeting place. And that's really just, we're talking about a building with potential.

But there's a lot of potential right here in our midst. You have potential. You have potential. And I think so, too, we see as much as sometimes it's hard to see it.

There's potential in some of these young people, too. There's potential there. There's a potential. You know, I was at a meeting, the Northern Community Summit, that they held of late around here to talk about Elizabeth in general, and the community, and what the future holds for us as a community.

[8 : 34] And I was really impressed, actually, with Mike Rand, the Premier of South Australia. A couple of times he used the phrase, and I was quite surprised, it's probably not a politically correct thing to say these days, but he talked about the God-given potential that was in people.

The God-given potential. He said it a couple of times. I thought, wow, that's good to hear that from our Premier's lips, from the one who really is the representative of our state government, that he would say that.

And, friends, there is a lot of God-given potential within people, within this community, within the lives of younger people and older people here, within this church there's a huge potential that we want to tap into, that we want to see people urged out, to launch out into the deep, to take a risk. You know, it's a risk for myself personally and Julie, in buying this building, and the risk of it, you know, and likewise the risk of another one.

There's a stepping out into the unknown, there's an uncertainty. You know, there's big borrowings, there's a risk factor there. But, yet, we can see the potential. We can see what can be, what can be, with the eyes of faith.

[9 : 52] We can see beyond, you know, in a way the small numbers this morning, to see what can be, the potential that can be. And we need to just launch out into the deep, brothers and sisters, as a church, as a people, as individuals.

This is a time when we can launch out, a time for action. Enough of complaining and coaxing. Now is the time for warfare, for manhood, for blood, toil, tears and sweat, if need be, because victory is ahead.

Victory is what our aim is, what our object is. It's a time to rise up, as Nehemiah, in chapter 2 verse 18 of Nehemiah.

Rise up and build. We're not talking about a physical building, in this case, but a building together of our faith, a building together of our strength, as a corporate body of people.

Launch out. Launch out. It's like the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 9. He said, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers of few. Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

[11 : 04] That word, send forth, it's got the sense of pushing people out to the work. It's got the sense of driving people into the harvest field, of labourers being forced down to get busy for Christ.

That's the picture friends, there's a harvest awaiting, and we need to get busy. We need to get out there, to launch out, to be thrust down into the harvest fields as labourers.

So, launch out. And secondly, let down your nets. Let down your nets for a draft, for a catch. It seemed illogical. It seemed impossible.

It seemed irrational that they should go out there again. They'd already scouted out the whole lake, and you know, they'd been there, done that. No thing to show for it.

Yet, God says, Let down your nets. He tells us to do something impossible, irrational, illogical, something that didn't feel comfortable.

[12 : 04] They were flat. They were flagged. They were weary, exhausted. Just another let down. Another disappointment. Another wasted effort.

When we're feeling let down, let down your net. Let down your net. God's just around the corner. Galatians 6 verse 9, it says, And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Don't get weary in well-doing. Christian brother or sister today, don't get weary in the work. We know the harvest is great, and there's not enough workers.

There's not enough laborers. But we've got to pray the Lord. Ask the Lord to send more, to send people that He can use to send them out into the harvest.

Because He is the owner, the Lord, the master of the harvest. He owns the harvest. It's His. And it's His work. There was no sign of fish for these guys. You know, there was nothing there.

[13 : 04] The water was clear. It looked like there wasn't any fish there. I'd imagine it just seemed like this was just another waste of time. A pointless exercise for Peter and the fishermen.

It was hard. It was arduous. The nets were heavy. Why would they bother putting those nets back in the water again, and having to haul them out again? Hard yackered. And friends, the ministry, the Christian life can be like that.

Beset with disappointments, with discouragements, with setbacks, with letdowns. And you can face discouragement. You will face discouragement as a Christian.

In witnessing, you may encounter a lack of fruit, a lack of response, a lack of results. There's no evident fruit for a season, and yet we shall reap if we faint not.

We shall reap if we hang in there. And verse 5, Peter responds to our Lord. He says, Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.

[14 : 05] Faith fulfilled the net. Brother, faith fulfilled the net. Just let it down. Let down your net. Let it down at his word. Faith that acts on the word of God will see results.

Peter acted on the basis of the word of God. On the grounds of the word, in response to the word. He was standing on the word. And friends, God uses you.

He uses you. He uses your boat. He uses your net. He uses your hand. Will you let him use you? Will you let him take what you have and use what you have?

Will you trust and obey? Peter could have not obeyed and he wouldn't have seen God bless. God's looking for obedience.

Not excuses. Not reasons why not. Not even our righteousnesses. I was hearing a friend talk lately and he said, All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

[15 : 07] Even our best ones. That made me think. Even the best thing that I've done. Even the best thing that I've done for God. The best thing that I could put a certificate on the wall about and say and brag about.

You know, if you could think of it that way. Even the very best that I've done, that you've done, is just as filthy rags. In consequence, in contrast to Christ our Lord and Saviour, the very best efforts and the very best trying of our own is really just filthy rags.

Even the best that we can do. But God's not looking for reasons why not. We could think of, you know, you could think of reasons why not. Why we shouldn't have even gone into this place.

You know, you had a step down in that venture of faith. Of a burnt out shell of a building that was fit to be bulldozed. That was a wreck. It was a ruin. No one else wanted to touch it.

It was too much hard work. And friends, yet, you've got to launch out into the deep. You've got to let down your neck. You've got to trust Him. Trust Him. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

[16:17] And don't forget who's on your boat. When you're out there in the deep and He's there, He's going to say what to do. And if we obey what He says to do, then something's going to happen.

Their work brought zero. Their work brought absolutely nothing. And I guess we can look back on the history of our church and you could think there are certain things that have happened that have seemed fruitless and maybe some of the things that we've done as a church haven't been at His word.

They've just been someone's good idea or best intentions. And I guess you live and you learn, as I am constantly, hopefully, learning, through my mistakes. That you see through things that we've tried and done, for example, op shops and whatnot, that probably wasn't really something that was necessarily God's leading, but it might have been someone's best intentions and their best idea of what to do.

And we could look back and reflect on things that have happened as a church, as the Lord has led us. And as things have happened, maybe some of those things weren't God's best for us as a church. And I acknowledge that.

It's a bit like these guys. They've done a lot of work, but they've not seen the results. And sometimes our works bring zero because they're of our own strength and our own effort and our own best ideas and intentions and thinking.

[17:45] But we want to be led by the word, don't we? Now, we could pack our work with lots of programs and activities that can make us a very busy church, a church with lots of activities, and yet miss the whole point of what really counts, what really matters, what's really important.

that we grow as a body, as believers, as individuals, and be strengthened in our faith and commitment. And I guess it's discerning and we all need to individually and as a body discern what is God saying, what is God's word to us.

It's the word that makes the difference. It's the word that brought results here for Peter. The word brought abundance, didn't it? When they acted on his word, when they did what he said to do.

And friends, don't hold back. If God puts something on your heart to do, don't hold it back. Don't hold back. Don't think of all the reasons why not. Don't look back at the discouragement of the past. You've got God-given potential. God-given potential. Tap into that. Sometimes we suffer from paralysis. Paralysis.

[18:52] Our faith, our serving God, we're paralyzed because we just, whether it's fear or just lack of willingness to step over the line.

And it's human nature, isn't it? And yet, faith. Faith can make the difference. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing the word of God. And we see faith rewarded here. Faith is going to be rewarded.

Your faith will be rewarded. Peter, maybe, didn't really have a lot of faith. He seemed to kind of hint there that, you know, Oh, this is pointless, Lord, but at thy word I'll do it.

You know, it seemed like everything pointed to him as it being a bit of a waste of time. And yet, their faith was rewarded. As we see the enormous amount of fish, their nets started to rip apart.

They were tearing apart because of the weight of the cat. And their boats were so filled with fish that they began to sink. There's an abundance in God.

[19:55] Launch out into the deep. Take a risk. Take a challenge of faith. Do something that might be a bit scary.

A bit daunting. A bit hard. And it might go against the flesh. You might really not feel like doing it. You know, not every time when you serve the Lord do you always feel like it.

But we don't go by our feelings, do we? There's faith. We launch out into the deep. We let down our nets for a draught. And thirdly, we look up to the Lord. Verse 8.

Peter fell down. He fell down on his knees before the Lord. And he said, Lord, I'm a sinner. Lord, I'm a sinner. Depart from me. In verse 8. They were terrified.

This was scary. There they were out in the deep. The boats were getting flooded with the weight of the fish. Peter cries out, Oh Lord, I'm a sinner.

[20 : 55] And friends, when we see what God has done, when we see His blessings, when we see how unworthy, inadequate, helpless we are, how needy we truly are, then we'll see how great He is.

When we see God's blessings, when we see God's blessings, when we look back, as we see in the history of the church, God's blessings through time, the blessings that God has led us by His grace in choosing us, in using us.

Now He calls us, like He calls Simon. He says, from now on, you're going to go and catch people. He says, you're going to catch human beings. You're going to take them alive.

You're going to capture them. And He wants you and I to be fishers of men. To go out and fish for men. To go out and fish for men and women and children.

And reach them for the Saviour. To capture them for Christ. And when we see His majesty, it humbles us. We see how great He is. We see the miraculous provision, the miraculous workings of God, the abundance that He gives to us as He rewards our faith.

[22 : 06] It humbles us, doesn't it? And we can think, as we look back, hitherto have the Lord helped us, His grace. At the end of all your labours, when you hear His welcome home, and His well done, We can be like those in Luke 17.

He said, as the Lord tells us, so likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, saying, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do.

Luke 17, 10, the servants said, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do. It's our duty. It's our duty. We can't do any less.

And we don't seek any praise and expect any reward. We don't do it for medals, for recognition, for plaudits of men, for praise of men, for applause, for the crowds, for getting credit for ourselves.

The credit is all His. We can only do what it is our duty to do. We've got a duty to serve. You have a duty to use your God-given abilities and your talents.

[23 : 14] Find the place. Find the place of service and serve. We're just doing what it is our obligation to do. It's our obligation. We can't do any less.

And we're not looking for any credit out of it. What drives us is not that there's going to be some crown to wear or some reward of recognition, but just to see His smile. Just to see His smile. And we'll hear His voice. He'll say, well done.

But just to see His face. Won't that be enough? Won't that be enough for all the effort and at times the setbacks, the letdowns that you might encounter in your life?

That you've served faithfully. That you've done that which was your duty to do. And to know His delight. To know His joy when we meet Him. When we see Him. Friends, we are workers together with God. It says in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 1.

He's on the boat. We are workers together with God. What is your place of service? Different ones of us have got different talents and gifts. Different callings and abilities.

[24 : 24] It's finding where you fit. It's finding what God is putting on your heart to do. When He's saying, Lord, shout into the deep. He's saying, let down your net for a catch.

What's your net? Ian's net might be different from my net. Richard's net might be different from my net. Eileen's. One of you has different abilities. It's a bit like, sometimes we put people in the wrong things or we try to do the wrong things.

Something amusing happened this morning. I thought I'd bring it along to demonstrate. I went to my sock drawer this morning to get my socks on. A totally unspiritual example here.

I thought this was a sock. I got it out of my drawer and went to put it on. I opened it up and, oh! They weren't socks. They weren't socks. They were my son's gloves that he's given me to take over.

You know, we can make the mistake of trying to do something that's not our job to do. Trying to be a sock when we're a glove. Find out what God's calling is for your life. Let down your net for a draft.

[25 : 37] Find out what God is putting on your heart. Hear His word, what He tells you to do. What He tells us to do. And it might be different for you than it is for me. But you've got a net. You've got

