

An Encounter With Jesus

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[0:00] Well, good morning. My name is Billy Nye. It's good to see everyone this morning. And today we're going to be looking at Luke chapter 5.

So, feel free to open up your Bibles. There's a Bible in the pew back in front of you. ESV or NIV, it doesn't matter. Open up to Luke chapter 5.

And let's get ready to hear from God's Word. Well, when I was in 8th grade, I had an encounter. No, not that kind of encounter.

Not a romantic kind of encounter. It is a, although it is kind of like a romance story. I was in 8th grade when I first encountered hobbits.

And a wizard named Gandalf. And a gang of dwarves led by Thorin Oakenshield. And if some of you are wondering what in the world I'm talking about, it's because you need to have that encounter too.

[1:08] I was in 8th grade when I first read the books written by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and many, many others. And let me tell you, after I had that encounter, I was transformed.

I was a committed fan afterwards. And fan is probably speaking lightly because I was a devoted fan. I was a hobbit nut.

And I read Tolkien's book so much that it just, it changed, really changed part of my identity. I began to see my life through the lens of Middle Earth.

And I started, it changed the people I hung out with. I started hanging out with people who shared my affinity for all things hobbitish. And my alter ego was Samwise Gamgee.

And get this, my first email address was lamsamwise at hotmail.com. Please don't email it. It is no longer in service.

[2:14] That was a thing of the past. I eventually became the president of the High Council of Middle Earth at College Heights Christian School in Joplin, Missouri.

I had an encounter. And it transformed me into someone who was devoted and committed to something greater than myself. And it changed me, really, forever.

Well, this morning, I'd like us to look at another transforming encounter that a man had in the pages of a far more precious book than anything written by J.R.R. Tolkien.

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 5, there is a beautiful picture of what happens to one guy, one ordinary sinful man, when he has a transforming encounter with something far greater than himself. This guy's name is Simon. And this is what happens to Simon when Jesus decides to knock on the door of Simon's life. He winds up giving up his whole life to follow Jesus.

[3:20] And once he has encountered this Jesus for real, he walks away from the scene as a changed man, committed and attached to Jesus Christ. And I think that's what we're going to see this morning as we examine this passage, and what it has to say to us is that when we encounter the real Jesus, when we encounter Jesus in a genuine way, we come away as transformed and committed followers.

We are changed forever. But how does that happen? What does a genuine encounter with Jesus look like? And how does it make committed disciples out of ordinary sinful people like us?

Well, let's go and find out, shall we? The Gospel according to Luke, chapter 5, the first 11 verses. We'll walk our way through the story. And as we go, we're going to peel back four layers to this encounter.

So be watching, listening for those four layers of that encounter as we come to them. Are you ready? Here we go. So first, Luke sets a great scene for us in verses 1 and 2.

Let's read. Let's dive in. 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.

[4:44] That's the Sea of Galilee, FYI. And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. So Jesus is teaching a crowd of people near the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

He's probably in the town of Capernaum, which was Simon Peter's hometown. And as well as it was kind of served as a Jesus' ministry base while he was ministering in Galilee.

It was a bustling fishing town in the first century. It had all the sights and the sounds that accompany the fishing industry. You can just kind of sniff the tangy, fishy smell in the air.

The splashing of the water is something you can hear as it comes up and washes the shore. You can feel the sandy gravel under the feet of the crowds. And you can hear Jesus' voice teaching them the word of God.

You see this group of sweaty bodies warned by the midday sun. They're pressing in on Jesus as he speaks to the crowd. But then Luke's camera kind of pans away from this scene, and it focuses on two boats.

[5:50] And we see Jesus looking over. He sees this pressing crowd in on him. And he sees two boats, and you see a little light bulb go on over Jesus' head. Like, hey, I got an idea. And so the owners are right next to him.

They're cleaning their nets. And Jesus decides, hey, this is going to be a really good, useful teaching tool. And so he hops into one of the boats, as we're about to read.

And that is the first layer of our encounter, as we're about to see in verse 3. So the first layer of our encounter, let's see if we can identify it, verse 3. 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. So what's the first layer? Remember, although Simon hasn't really come into the picture yet, he and Jesus are really the main characters of this story.

And so first interaction between Jesus and Simon in this story, Jesus initiates contact. That's the first layer of this encounter. Jesus initiates contact with Simon.

[6:52] He's the one who initiates contact with those whom he calls to be his disciples. Jesus is the go-getter. Now this may seem obvious, but it's really significant.

Jesus initiates contact with the fishermen. He hops into one of their boats and he asks Simon to go out a little under the water. And he creates an ideal teaching situation. This would have made a nice natural amphitheater.

The crowds gather just along the shoreline. The boat is just a few yards off the shore. It allows Jesus to have a good teaching situation. His voice carries across the water.

It works well. He teaches the crowd at a comfortable distance. They could all hear him. However, this initiation of contact with Simon is not something that came completely out of the blue.

In the Gospel of John, the first chapter, we learn that Jesus had previously met Simon, along with Andrew, his brother, probably further south in Judea when John was baptizing people in the Jordan.

[7:52] And they had spent some time with him. They probably heard him teach on several occasions. They probably seen him even work some miracles. And so there was some familiarity here.

But notice that this initial reaching out to Simon is a beginning of a big journey that Simon's about to take with Jesus. And it's Jesus is the one who reaches out first.

He seeks him out. He had more than just a helpful teaching technique in mind when he called Simon and hopped into his boat. And by the way, this is not standard procedure.

Jewish rabbis of the first century did not initiate relationship with their disciples. If you wanted to become a follower of a rabbi, you signed up with him. He had a clipboard around with a little pen attached, quill, parchment.

And you signed up with him. If you wanted to hang out with him, he didn't go to you. This was not standard procedure. He was going against the normal tradition of his day. And what does Simon

do?

[8:57] Well, we would think just from the first look, well, hey, no big deal. Okay, sure, you can use my boat. That's fine. But think about it. We find out later that Simon and his partners had just been out fishing the entire night.

And now they're having to prolong their rest time to go back on the lake the next evening to have a successful fishing trip after an unsuccessful fishing trip just that previous night.

And so this is an inconvenience. And yet, Simon responds positively to Jesus. He could have declined Jesus' request. So Peter obeys.

He takes Jesus just offshore. Jesus finishes teaching the crowd. But the scene soon changes. So Jesus finishes teaching the crowd. And then he turns to Simon in the boat. And that's going to be our second layer to this encounter in verses 4 to 5.

Let's read. The second layer to this encounter is Jesus that makes a call to trust.

[10:18] Jesus calls Simon to trust him. This request was ridiculous. On the face of it, it's like, oh, no big deal.

Okay, sure. But think about it. I'm not much of a fisherman. But even a greenhorn like me knows that the best time to go fishing is in the morning or at night, not in the middle of the day.

It's not the best idea. When the sun is hitting the water directly, fish like to be in the cooler water at the bottom of the lake. And Simon's a professional fisherman. He knows this.

And so on top of that, they're guaranteed probably not to have anything to catch. And that means their nets are going to have to be washed again. And they're going to have to get out of the boat, do all the cleanup, redo.

They'd basically be wasting all their work from the previous morning of getting done with fishing. And so this is just a ridiculous request.

[11:21] Jesus is asking them to prolong their work, inconvenient, and basically not have anything to show for it because there's no fish to catch along the surface of the water.

Humanly speaking, the situation is just kind of funny. You see a carpenter turned rabbi, Jesus, is telling a professional fisherman how to fish.

Any self-respecting professional fisherman would have told Jesus to dive to the bottom of the lake himself if he wanted to get the fish so badly. So why would Jesus make this ridiculous request?

Well, remember that Jesus and Peter aren't exactly strangers at this point. They had crossed paths previously. And Peter had also just finished hearing Jesus teach God's word.

He had just been listening to the words of God coming from the mouth of the man sitting next to him in the boat. And what was that word of God? Well, if we look up just a few verses in chapter 4, verse 43, just above this story, we'll see it.

[12:26] Jesus says, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well. Jesus is talking about and he is proclaiming the invading kingdom of God into this world.

God's almighty present kingship, his authority and his ability to reign in righteousness. His absolute control over all things and invading in a person.

The man Jesus Christ. And he came to undo the effects and the reality of sin to establish God's righteous reign over his people once again. So Jesus has just been speaking these words of authority and kingship about the kingdom of God.

And then he turns to Peter right away and he says, hey, put down your nets. He's basically asking Peter, do you believe what I've just said? Do you believe that the kingdom has come in me?

Are you ready to act on it? Are you ready to put skin in the game? Or are you just letting me use your boat? It's not a call to trust intellectually. It's an active, obedient trust.

[13:36] Jesus is calling Simon to have faith, real faith, active faith. To be confident that the person speaking next to him knows his profession better than he does.

So what does Simon do? He trusts. And he obeys. Trust and obey. There's no other way. At first, though, he protests.

They had a wearisome labor the night before. They had lack of success the night before. That's his personal and professional opinion on the matter. However, notice that he calls him master.

My dad once owned a boat. And when dad got on that boat, he was the captain. And not in a dictatorial way, but he knew his boat. He was the master of his boat. Peter's in his boat. He's in his boat. This is his livelihood. And now he's showing deference. He's showing respect and saying, okay, Jesus, you're the captain. You're the owner of this boat.

[14:37] I'll do what you say, even though everything in me says that's nuts. I am going to acknowledge you as the master of my boat, the master of my life. So he humbly takes orders from Jesus.

He puts Jesus' words over his own opinion and his own preference and his own convenience and comfort. So he rows out the deeper water. He lets down those heavy nets into the water. And Jesus is looking on. And here comes our third layer. And really, the climax of the story. It gets really intense. Let's read verses 6 to 10.

And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish. And their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

And they came and they filled both the boats and they both began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, depart from me.

[15:39] 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, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

So what's the third layer of this encounter? The third layer is that Jesus gives Simon a glimpse of his glory. Jesus gives Simon a glimpse of his glory.

The action is tense. Just imagine the scene. The nets are no sooner submerged than all of a sudden they feel this rush of fish and the pull of a swarm of trout or whatever it was.

And not only do they see the fish, but they realize that their nets are creaking and they're snapping at the pressure. And so they jump into action. Simon has to signal the other boat to come and help them. And James and John hop into their boat and they get out there.

And they're trying to get all the fish out of the nets before the nets break. And then once they get all the fish in, they realize, oh, shoot, our boats are starting to sink because there's so many fish.

[16:45] The astonishment of Simon and his companions is really profound, especially considering that these guys were professionals. They do this all the time.

And all of a sudden, this is probably the biggest catch they've ever seen. And it happened at the most unlikely time of day and at the command of the most unlikely person. However, as amazing as this catch is, the critical moment is Simon's response.

You would expect Simon to be really surprised, really excited, and maybe later extremely grateful. So it should catch us off guard when we read Simon falling down at Jesus' knees.

Now, knees because Jesus is sitting in the boat, so he falls at his knees. He's just watching all this happen, probably with a huge grin on his face. And Peter cries out, depart from me.

Get out of my life. I am a sinful man, oh Lord. Now, Peter obviously didn't mean that instant. They were in the middle of a lake. But he's begging Jesus to get out of his life.

[17:56] Why? I'd say, hey, you want to come fishing tomorrow? No. No, Simon recognized something. Actually, he recognized two somethings.

Something about Jesus and something about himself. He caught a glimpse of Jesus' unique glory. He saw that Jesus really does have authority.

He has a power and authority that is above anything that Simon has ever encountered. More than any other person. More than any other royal political figure.

More than any rabbi or scribe. Jesus has unquestioned authority. And then he saw himself. In the light of that authority.

In the light of that unmatched power and goodness. And he saw his sinful unworthiness to be in proximity to such purity and such authority.

[18:57] I love the way one writer put it. Simon's reaction to the power shown in the miraculous haul of fish puts Jesus in a realm or sphere to which Simon himself does not belong.

Today we know the whole story. We've read the whole Bible. Simon didn't have that opportunity. Jesus really was and is God in the flesh.

Through whom God made all things. The second person of the Godhead. Fully God and fully man. Dictating the movements of the molecules of the entire universe.

Jesus. And so though Peter didn't have that complete knowledge yet. He certainly recognized that Jesus' power and authority were not of this world.

And that he was in the presence of someone who was in the very close to God. He recognized that the rabbi sitting next to him in the boat wielded an authority greater than Peter had ever encountered.

[20:00] And it takes Peter's attention completely off the astounding haul of fish. Though it probably would have got him a lot of money. And he falls to Jesus' knees. He's terrified. He realizes that he is in God's holy presence.

And he is right next to the hot spot of God's presence and authority and goodness.

His holiness. And he is near to an unworthy, unclean, unholy person like Simon.

And like us. Simon's response is absolutely appropriate. This is how sinners should respond to God's pure and holy presence. By the way, does it sound a little familiar?

You don't have to turn there. But Simon's reaction to Jesus is very much like Isaiah's reaction when he sees the glory of God on display in Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah says, Simon and Isaiah both are desperately aware of their utter unworthiness to be near to God's holy presence because of their sin.

[21:23] There's no bargaining. There's no excuse making. No self-justifying. It's just eyes full of the power and brilliance of God.

And full awareness of the danger they're in. How their sin has angered a righteous God who has full authority to separate them from him forever. And this is the ancient problem.

It's not just Simon's and Isaiah's. It's been all of humanity's problem from Adam and Eve to us today. We cannot casually approach God because of sin.

He is not someone to be walked up to lightly. We bear guilty stains of rebellion against him. He's a just God. He is a consuming fire, Hebrews says.

Anything sinful and unclean that comes near to his fiery goodness is in imminent danger of being consumed in holy wrath. So that makes us wonder how is Jesus going to respond to this guy who is rightly acknowledging the nature of the relationship between Simon and Peter.

[22:32] Well, he could have consented to Simon and left him. He could have gotten out of his life. He would have removed his holy and good presence from Simon forever. He could have judged him then and there.

He could have consumed him in just wrath. He could have brushed off. Actually, he couldn't have. But he noticed he doesn't brush off Simon's confession and say, Oh, Simon, you're not that bad of a guy.

Your sin isn't too bad. I'll just sweep it under the rug. It's okay. Instead, without denying his sinfulness, he calms him and assures him. He says, Do not be afraid.

In Jesus' presence, Peter doesn't need to fear God's judgment. Why? Why not? Why not? Why not? This command not to fear is pointing forward to how God is going to fully deal with Simon's sin and our sin through his son Jesus about three years later.

Later, Jesus would be nailed to a cross. He would become Simon's sin and not just Simon's, my sin and your sin. And we paid for by Jesus on the cross.

[23:45] It's as if in Jesus' mind, telling Peter at that very moment in the boat, Do not be afraid. His mind is looking forward to Gethsemane and Golgotha and the cross and God's angry wrath toward him that he never deserved.

And knowing that this man would be okay. And he would be forgiven. And he would be justified.

And he has no reason to fear because of what Christ was going to do three years hence.

That brings us to the last layer of this encounter. Let's read verses 10 and 11. Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid.

From now on, you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything. And they followed him. So what's the fourth layer to this encounter?

Jesus invites Simon to join his mission. Jesus invites Simon to join his mission. He's just dealt with Simon's sin.

[24:59] He's just reassured him that his sin is going to be dealt with. And that he doesn't have to fear being in Jesus' presence. And now, now that he's just dealt with Simon's sin, now he's inviting him to participate in his mission to the world.

The mission of the kingdom of God in this world. Jesus gives Simon this astounding invitation to catch men. Now, the language is just wonderfully appropriate because Jesus and Simon are having this conversation with a bunch of gasping fish flopping around on the deck of the boat right in front of him.

And so, it makes sense that Jesus would say, guess what, your profession's about to change. Your identity's about to change. Your purpose is about to change.

Because you're no longer going to be catching fish. You're going to be catching men. There's a couple of different verbs for catch that Luke uses in this passage. And this one is different. They're all unique verbs.

This one means to catch alive or to capture. Not as the idea is an ongoing gathering of live fish out of the water.

[26:14] If Jesus is the kingdom of God on earth, then God is through him rescuing men and women from the dangerous waters of judgment by his grace and gathering them into his kingdom to give them life.

But notice how he does it. How does God catch sinners up from the waters of judgment? What's his instrument? It's people.

Jesus' disciples. The whole miraculous catch story right here that we've just read kind of serves as a little mini picture of the mission of the kingdom.

Jesus is the master fisherman. He catches a few fish. That's Simon, James, John, Andrew, Bartholomew, etc., etc. And then the master fisherman also knows where the other fish are that need to be caught.

And so he tells his disciples, hey, go cast your nets over there. Even though it may not make any sense to them. It may not be convenient or comfortable or even likely.

[27:19] And he invites them to participate in his mission through faithful obedience. And then he is also the one who gives them the success in their mission in the most unlikely of ways. As they put their full confidence in him and respond to him by letting down their nets.

So how do Simon and the other disciples respond? They respond by radically committing themselves to Jesus. Verse 11 is simple and it's powerful.

They left everything behind. They followed Jesus. Two verbs. They abandoned everything. It was their previous priority. And they committed themselves wholeheartedly to Jesus and to his mission. So in heart and action, they are now fully committed to Jesus as his followers through this encounter. This new commitment takes priority over all of our previous allegiances. They leave everything to commit themselves to Jesus.

They now have a new governing priority in their lives. Jesus has demonstrated that he's worthy of their total trust and commitment.

[28:28] He knows their profession and their needs better than they do. And that is the right response for them to commit themselves wholeheartedly to him. And it is our right response as well.

You see, when we have a real encounter with a real Jesus, we experience someone who lays claim to our priorities, to our commitments, and to our whole life.

We see the four layers show up. He initiates the contact with us. He's the one who goes after us. He's the fisherman.

He snatches us up. And we respond because God's awakened our hearts to our condition and to our need for him. Then he calls us to trust him.

These are in no particular order, but I think they help us see very clearly how Jesus calls us. He calls us to trust him wholeheartedly and to act on that trust even if it costs us.

[29:30] In fact, it probably will cost us. And yet, in spite of the cost, we lean on him to give us grace to put our trust in him as he calls us to trust him.

And then he gives us a glimpse of his glory that can be a conversion that can be all throughout our Christian walk. We see Jesus in new ways, little sparks of light that open our eyes to, wait a minute. This really is real. This guy is for real. He has something that I don't have. He is wanting to give me something that I desperately need.

And yet, as we see his glory, we also see our sin more clearly. And sometimes we get despair. But as we look to him, he says, don't be afraid.

Because he points us ahead to the cross. And he reminds us of what he's done for us. And we see his glory even more clearly and now without fear. And he also invites us to join him on his mission. [30:35] All of these things work together when we encounter Jesus. All of these things are a part of the package of following Jesus. As we look to a new year, we're in 2016 now.

And as I wrap up, I want us to think about how we can respond to this rightly. Maybe you are going into 2016 and God's been kind to you.

You're resting in him. You're trusting in him. You're confident that no matter what 2016 may bring, you're ready for it. By God's grace. Or maybe, maybe you're a storm-caught, tossed Christian.

And you're looking back at 2015 and you're wondering what hit you. Or maybe you're just a weak sheep. Storm-tossed or not. And you don't even care what year it is.

You just are trying to survive day to day. Or maybe, maybe you're like, I'm not really sure about this whole Jesus thing. I'm not really sure if I want to commit myself to this guy that lived 2,000 years ago.

[31:41] And people go to church and sing songs to him and read a weird old book. I mean, what's up with that? But maybe you're curious. Maybe that's why you're here. Well, wherever you find yourself, I want to ask you, if you would ask yourself and ask God how you should respond to this encounter you have had this morning with the living Christ through his word.

Let me just encourage you to consider responding in four possible ways. They go right along with the four layers. They're four R's. Four R's. First, remember that he initiates contact.

Contact. Remember that he initiates contact. If you're a Christian, it's because Jesus pursued you. You didn't pursue him. I look back on my life, and I am astounded at the grace God has shown me and how it was so unlooked for.

Jesus is the one who pursues us. If you're a Christian this morning, remember, you're not hanging on to him. He found you first. That means he's hanging on to you by the power of his grace.

And so your relationship with him has less to do with your performance than it does with the power of his redeeming grace at work in your life. He saved you when you were still a sinner and weren't even looking for him.

[33:00] That means he can still save you now. He can still maintain you now. He can still uphold you now. Thank him and praise him for that grace. If you're not a Christian, but you might be feeling awakened to something that you haven't before, a desire to know more about this God and this Jesus, that's a sign that he might be initiating contact.

So yield to him and pursue it back. Talk with somebody here about it. Respond to him. Don't delay. If the king is initiating contact with you, don't delay.

Don't put it off. Everything, eternity, is at stake. So first remember, second, reply. Reply to his call to trust him, even if it's costly.

How is Jesus calling you to trust him in a way that might even be costly to you? And to act on that trust in your life right now. What is Jesus calling you to do to obey, to trust him in faith?

What is he calling you to be faithful in that you don't really want to be faithful in? What command is he telling you to obey that you have been neglecting, perhaps? What sin is he calling you to put to death, even if it costs you?

[34:28] What godly fruit is he asking you to pursue, even if it costs you? Even if it's not comfortable. Maybe he's calling you, if you're not a Christian this morning, to renounce your claim of being in charge of your own life and give it up to him.

No matter what it costs you, Jesus is so incredibly worth it. So first, remember, second, reply. Third, run.

Run after glimpses of his glory. Pursue. Run after glimpses of his glory, his goodness, his grace, even if it stings.

Just like it stung Peter when he saw that glimpse of Jesus' glory. Run after it. Even if it means you see more of your sin in the light of his beauty, nothing satisfies like being near to Jesus.

So run after it. Run after it. Only when you're close to Jesus can you experience the delight of being loved by God the Father and having fellowship with God the Spirit.

[35:37] Abandon the smoke and mirrors of worldly pleasures if they are distracting you from the pure light of his immense power and glory. Maybe that means turning off the TV more and opening the Bible more.

Maybe that means taking an audit of the way that you spend your time. The way you value the priorities you have in your life. It's a new year.

It never hurts to make some changes. To pursue glimpses of his glory. Maybe it just means simply falling to your knees this afternoon and asking him to give you more.

to make you more aware of himself and have more glimpses of his glory. It's always a good place to start. So remember, reply, run, RSVP.

RSVP to Jesus' invitation. He's inviting you to join him in his mission. RSVP to that mission. Say, I'm in. Listen, refuse to live your life for your tiny kingdom.

[36:45] Jesus' kingdom is huge. It's something greater than yourself. And it gives you so much to live for. He is calling you, all of us, if you are Christians, to let down our nets.

Even if it makes no sense to us to let down our nets. Even if success seems unlikely. I've got neighbors on my street whose eternal destinies I don't know about.

Jesus is asking me to let down my nets. Be wise. Be prayerful. Be watchful. Accept his invitation. If you're a Christian, you were once in those dangerous waters of God's judgment and God, through someone letting down their nets, snatched you up.

So ask God to expand your heart for the lost and RSVP to his invitation to join him. He is worth it.

Christ the King Church, Jesus is calling us to be his committed disciples this year.

Let's honor him. Let's trust him. Let's obey him. Let's treasure him. And let's join him for the glory of God's kingdom. Let me pray for us. Father, it's good to hear from your word.

[38:04] Father, thank you that you speak to us. Do not be afraid. You've dealt with our sin fully and finally through the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. And in that we stand and we rejoice.

God, help us to trust you. Help us to obey you wholeheartedly. Help us to join you in your mission to have faith that you're going to give us success as we let down our nets to catch folks, to bring them into your kingdom.

Father, I pray that we treasure you above all this year. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.