

Fishing With Jesus

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: 16 October 2022

Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 00] Please turn with me again to Luke chapter 5 and from verse 1 to 11. Luke 5 verses 1 through 11.

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory, our supreme concern through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Is there any setting in which Jesus is out of place? We find him in vineyards and olive groves and temples and marketplaces on the land or on the sea. Is there any setting in which Jesus is out of place? Is there any setting in which living for and talking about Jesus is out of place? Home or office, gym or library, school, university? Is there any setting in which being a Christian is out of place? Abraham Kuyper, former prime minister of the Netherlands, once said, there is not a square inch of our human existence over which Christ, sovereign over all, does not cry mine. Every square inch of our lives is his by right and relationship. All our dreams and ambitions, all our work and our labor, all our effort and our intelligence. It's all his.

Now today we're going fishing with Jesus or rather we're learning about how to fish with Jesus. The thing about fishing with Jesus is that it isn't confined to the sea or to any body of water.

However, the fishing Jesus wants us to engage in his whole life. It involves fishing in the office and at home, at the gym in the library, at school, in university. Today, the hands of Luke, who himself was influenced by the greatest missionary of the early church, the apostle Paul, we're going to learn about how to fish with Jesus. Luke 5 verses 1 through 11 in the context of Luke's gospel together with the book of Acts, both of which, remember, are two parts of one volume, contains three themes.

[2 : 42] Fish, fishermen, and fishing. Fish, fishermen, and fishing. When it comes to our evangelism, to the growth of the church and the kingdom of God, remember these words of Abraham Kuyper, who himself is merely summarizing the teaching of the Bible when he said, there is not one square inch of our human existence over which Christ, sovereign over all, does not cry. Mine. And then in the privacy of your own heart and mind, challenge yourself as to whether there are areas in your life where Christ is not yet king and where you, therefore, are not fishing for him.

First of all then, fish, fish. Let me remind you that the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are the joint account of the earthly ministry of Jesus together with the growth of the early church.

And the gospel of Luke begins in the very heart of Jewish culture with its priests and its temples.

The book of Acts ends in the heart of Roman culture with its emperors and its palaces.

Between those two bookends is the story of the expansion of the kingdom of God, of the creation of the church, a church for which Christ the king dies on a cross, a church made up of both Jews and Gentiles, a church made up of the outcasts and of scourgings of society.

How then does this passage, Luke 5 verses 1 through 11, contribute to the story of the expansion of the kingdom of God and the creation of the church? Let's go back to the text. It begins with crowds of people pressing in upon Jesus to hear the word of God, to listen to the word he was preaching.

[4 : 54] The crowds were so great that Jesus had to get into a boat. And from there, Jesus commands Simon to put out a bit from the shore and let down the nets for a catch. Now Simon, an experienced fisherman, Simon later called Peter, an experienced fisherman is exhausted having spent all night fishing and catching nothing. But at Jesus' insistence, Simon does what he's told and almost immediately, the nets are filled to breaking point with a large multitude of fish. The text concludes with Jesus saying to Simon and his companions, James and John, now you will be catching men, you'll be fishing for men. So this passage moves from a crowd of people onto a crowd of fish fish. And it ends with Jesus calling these three men to become man fishers. The immediate message is obvious. Those for whom these three men are to fish are those crowds gathered on the shore listening to the word Jesus is preaching. The fish are the people who make

up the crowd Jesus is gathering, by the preaching of the people who make up the people who make up the people. And they're told nothing about the crowd other than that there were many of them, a great multitude.

Presumably they were made up of ordinary people, some physically whole, some disabled in some way, some male, some female, some rich, some poor. We don't know for sure, but I think we're on pretty safe ground to say that they were all Jewish and that there were no Gentiles among this crowd.

But there were all kinds of people. These are the fish. That's the immediate context of Luke 5 verses 1 through 11, an exclusively Jewish crowd. But then as we look into the context of Luke and Acts together, we find that the imagery of multitudes becomes more prominent. For example, in Acts 4, 32, we read of the early church, again made up almost exclusively of Jewish people, the full number or multitude of those who believed were of one heart and mind. Still at the early stage, the early church was made up entirely of Jewish Christians. Here they are all together in the early church, just like that great crowd of Jewish people gathered on the shores of Lake Gennesaret many years before.

But then in Acts 14 verse 1, we read something greater. By this stage, the apostle Paul was on a missionary journey to modern-day Western Turkey. And we read these words.

Now at Iconium, they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed. The early church has moved forward in its mission because for the first time, both Jews and Gentiles are included in the multitude of those who call Jesus Lord and Savior. In other words, by the end of the book of Acts, the believing crowd, the multitude, those caught in the net of the gospel, is composed not just of Jews, but of Gentiles also.

[8 : 50] In Luke 5, the crowd was exclusively Jewish. But by the end of the book of Acts, it is composed of people from all over the known world. So among whom are Peter, James, Simon, James, and John to fish?

Into what waters are the followers of Christ to let down their nets for a catch? Luke gives us the answer. The whole of humanity. The whole of humanity. Jews and Gentiles. Slave and free. Male and female. Rich and poor. Full and empty.

The Brexit debates have sparked all kinds of conflicts between British and European business, but none more so than among fishermen. Grinyard Bay, besides which my wife's parents live in the northwest of Scotland, was for many years emptied of its fish by Spanish trawlers, causing considerable consternation among local fishermen, my father-in-law included. The Brexit debates have set in stone, as it were, the hard border between British and international waters, where British and European fishermen can and cannot let down their nets. For thousands of years, the Old Testament church fished exclusively in Jewish waters. But with the coming of Jesus and the creation of the early church, the Christian church began to fish in international waters.

This is where the fish are taken from. This is where we fish. International waters. Remembering Kuyper's words about the whole of human existence belonging to Christ, we go to the world's peoples and we fish. We went to China and we fished for its peoples. Today, Chinese Christian missionaries are going to Afghanistan and fishing for its peoples. We went to Kenya and fished for its peoples. Today, Kenyan Christian missionaries are going to Tanzania to fish for its peoples. We went to Peru to fish for its peoples. Now, Peruvian Christian missionaries go to Chile to fish for its peoples. The church of Jesus Christ fishes in international waters, catching all kinds of people in the nets of the people in the nets of the gospel. Stand outside the doors of this church building on Crow Road for long enough in a way that we didn't even experience, most of us, on St.

Vincent Street. And you'll see people from every continent walking past. Stand outside for long enough and you'll see people from every social strata walking past. Stand outside for long enough and you'll see able and disabled people walking past. The gospel isn't just for middle-class white people whose preferences for flat white at Starbucks. The gospel is for all and our focus must be on fishing in international waters. All peoples of all nations make up the crowds in which we fish.

[12 : 39] Open up your eyes and see the horizon of God's global mission. Start on our own doorstep in our homes and offices, on the football sidelines when our kids are playing for their teams on a Saturday morning, on Crow Road, with every nationality on earth walking past these doors. Open your eyes. The fish are swimming. And Jesus has a multitude ready to swim into the nets of the gospel we preach here.

There will come a day, according to the Apostle John in Revelation 7, the same John who was there that day at Gennesaret, when there will be an innumerable multitude gathered at the foot of the throne of God in heaven, made up of all different kinds of people. That is the vision Luke 5 verses 1 through 11 provides us with. Open your eyes and see the horizons of God's global mission and all the fish who swim.

Fish. Second from this passage, fishermen. Fishermen. The gospel of Luke was written to the early church.

Now, we wear rose-tinted spectacles when it comes to the early church. The watchword of many churches has been over the years, back to the way the early church did it. But the truth is that the early church was a mess in every sense of the word. A moral, theological, cultural mess. One of the biggest problems she faced was that of authority. Different leaders claimed to have God's authority. The early church was plagued by all kinds of false teaching, spreading all kinds of false doctrine, and saying all kinds of harmful things about Christ and his gospel.

[14:36] Authority, and who possessed it, was a huge issue for the early church. You see that all the way through the book of Acts, and all the way through the New Testament letters.

Luke carefully includes this passage in Luke 5, verses 1 through 11, to remind the early church with whom authority rests, or rather, to whom Jesus has given authority.

The three pillars of the early church were Peter, called Simon here, James, and John.

The very same fishermen whom Jesus called to fish for him and left everything to follow him. These are they to whom Jesus has given authority, for they were with him from the beginning and were verbally commissioned by him. The false teachers infecting the early church with their doctrinal poison were not there that day by the lake of Gennesaret. Jesus did not verbally commission them or give them authority to fish for him. He gave authority to these three apostles, Peter, James, and John. And so ultimately it's to these three apostles, Peter, James, and John, the early church must look to for guidance, teaching, and leadership.

Now by the time the book of Acts was written, James was dead, having been murdered by Herod. But John and Peter were still alive. They had the authority to speak on behalf of Christ to the early church.

[16:21] But they did not just preach the gospel. They wrote letters inspired by the Spirit of Christ, which are themselves authoritative and are to be accepted and believed as though Jesus himself was speaking those words. So Luke wrote this passage to establish apostolic authority in the early church, for without such authority there would only be anarchy and chaos.

Now obviously, these apostles are long dead, and yet their letters are before us in the Bible.

Here we have apostolic authority in the writings of the apostles. Their words can be trusted, for they were genuinely called by and commissioned by Jesus to serve him.

As far as we know, Jesus wrote nothing himself, but he was very far from wordless. Rather, he wrote through these men he had called to be his fishermen.

Black pudding is an essential element in a full Scottish breakfast. You're listening, Katharine.

[17:45] Over the last number of years, restaurants proudly advertised their black pudding as being Stornoway black pudding. And by that, we're all thinking of Charlie Barley, the butcher in Stornoway, where Stornoway marrocks are made.

The problem is that unless you are a black pudding aficionado, there is no way to verify whether the black pudding you have on your breakfast plate has really been made by Charlie Barley, or when it's been made.

Whether it's genuine or not. Luke 5, verses 1 through 11, is included in the Holy Scripture to declare the authenticity and the genuineness of the apostles, and in so doing, to establish their authority as spokesmen for Christ in the early church.

The false teachers, with their strange teachings, may pretend to a kind of authority, but it's not genuine. Listen, how does this apply to us? You want to learn what Jesus, King and Savior, teaches?

You want to learn what the gospel we preach is? You want to learn what the nets are with which we are to fish for the souls of the world's peoples are?

[19:08] You've got it here in the apostolic witness, the Bible, the written words of those Jesus called to be man fishers.

And just like there are no no-go areas for the lordship of Jesus in our lives, there are no no-go areas for His Word.

The apostolic witness has authority in our homes, in our workplaces, and university lecture theatres. The Word of Christ's grace is to input into all of these areas, and every other area, these words are Christ's words.

So we have fish, and then we have fishermen, and then thirdly, we have fishing. Fishing. One of the greatest works of Scottish theology was written on this passage of Scripture.

On the night before his ordination to the ministry, the early 18th century boarder's Scottish minister, Thomas Boston, composed what he called a soliloquy on the art of man fishing.

[20 : 21] A soliloquy on the art of man fishing. It became the manual for his ministry. As a minister, he ultimately saw himself as an evangelist and a man fisher. Let me recommend that when you get home, you search the internet for Boston's soliloquy on the art of man fishing.

I try to read it once a year. But my purpose is not to summarize a historic work of Scottish theology. My purpose is to briefly reflect on three aspects of how we go about engaging in mission.

From this passage, how we fish in international waters as Christians and as a church. Before I do that, let me state that while the apostolic office was unique, the task of mission falls on every one of us.

We're all missionaries. Based upon the apostolic witness of Christ, we go and proclaim the truth about Jesus. And we'll sing of this in our last song.

We speak the word of God as Jesus spoke it by the lake of Gennesaret. First of all, engaging in mission requires obedience to Christ.

[21 : 43] Engaging in mission requires obedience to Christ. Jesus commanded Simon to let down his nets. He commanded Simon to let down his nets. Now it didn't seem like much sense for Simon to do such a thing.

After all, he and his partners had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Likewise, he told Simon to let down his nets in the deep. Common sense tells you that the fish of a lake gather not in the deep, but in shallow waters.

There was no logic to Jesus' request at all. And yet Simon obeyed. And look at the fruit of his obedience. So many fish, the nets were breaking.

I can't remember the last time the mission of the church in Scotland has been so fruitful that our nets have been at breaking point. When a newly licensed Ian McCaskill insisted to the church that God was calling him to plant a church on the island of South Uist, most of the wider free church thought he was mad.

Some of us still do, but the reason was because South Uist, as you know, is a predominantly Catholic island. What chance of a free church of Scotland on South Uist made no sense.

[23 : 06] But in obedience to the call of God, Ian went and in time a church was planted. Many on that island came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

And all because Ian obeyed the call of God. Where is our obedience to God's call to fish? Who knows what might happen if we obeyed God's call to fish in our city.

Perhaps it's time to stop washing our nets and start fishing with them instead. Secondly, engaging in mission involves fascination with Christ.

It involves fascination with Christ. Having pulled up such a large catch of fish, Simon recognized that Jesus was far more than a mere man.

We read in verses 8 and 9 that Simon Peter having seen fell on his knees before Jesus saying, Go away from me for I am a sinful man, Lord.

[24 : 15] And then we read, For amazement had come upon him and all those with him at the catch of fish which they had taken. Does Jesus obeys you?

Does the cross on which he died in his third day resurrection from the grave, does it fascinate you? I love the words of the hymn. We would have sung it today, but it's perhaps a bit too gospel hall for us.

The chorus of which says, All that thrills my soul is Jesus. He is more than life to me and the fairest of ten thousand in my blessed Lord I see.

Thrill yourself with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Fascinate yourself with the story of his cross and resurrection. Amaze yourself with how it was for your sins and my sins that he so lovingly gave himself and then victoriously rose from the dead.

Let him be your passion for it's as you fill yourself with the love of Christ he shall be seen by others. It stands to reason that your passion will rub off on others.

[25 : 27] You should be like the salt of God and the light to the world and all because you like Simon Peter and the other disciples have been captivated by Jesus Christ.

And then lastly engaging in mission involves dependence upon Christ. It involves dependence upon Christ. Simon and his companions put down their nets for a catch and they caught such a multitude of fish as they'd never seen before.

They'd spent the whole night before fishing and they'd caught absolutely nothing. What do you think? Was it just luck that changed their fortunes? Or was it the sovereign power of Jesus? They did nothing different from what they'd done the night before. If anything they acted less professionally than they had the night before. But essentially nothing changed about the way they did things between the night and the day.

It was not luck that changed their fortunes. It was Jesus. Yes they let down their nets but it was Jesus ultimately who was the fisherman.

[26 : 43] It was Jesus who caused this great shoal of fish to swim into their nets. It was Jesus doing the fishing. His supernatural knowledge of these waters combined with his supernatural power was more effective than any modern echo sounding fish finding device.

Who knows? Perhaps by the spirit he created these fish just for this demonstration of his power. The point is this Jesus is the ultimate fisherman fishing for human souls and catching us in the nets of the gospel.

Therefore we must depend upon him for the success of our mission. as Jesus will later say without me you can do nothing. Do we really believe that without Jesus we can do nothing?

Really? Jesus is the ultimate fisherman who draws and catches human souls. When we stand outside the doors and we invite people to come in to church it is Jesus who is the ultimate fisherman fishing through us.

but then with this we close why does he use us? Why? I have no doubt that Jesus could have caused this great multitude of fish to jump out of the sea and into the boat without having to use any of Simon's nets.

[28 : 12] Hypercalvinists who are very uneasy with the free offer of the gospel forget this. even though strictly speaking Jesus did not need Simon's nets to catch these fish he used Simon and his nets to catch the fish.

Jesus uses means to achieve his purpose of bringing people of all types and all nations to know him. He uses us he uses the words we speak and the lives we lead.

He doesn't need us but his grace is such that he leads us to deeper dependence upon him greater fascination with him and higher obedience to him by using us to bring fish into the net of the gospel. Man fishing or the task of evangelism has ultimately been designed by Jesus for our good to help us grow in the Christian faith. Are you struggling in your faith?

Are you weak? Are you in danger of falling away from your faith? Let me suggest that you resolve to share your faith with one other person this week.

[29 : 30] Whatever you might be one other person at home work school university gym church library whatever whoever you'll be amazed at how God will strengthen your faith even as you share the good news about Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day.

So there's no setting in which faith in Jesus is out of place. There's no setting in which living and speaking for Jesus is out of place. do you suppose that the Simon spoken of in this passage had any idea of where his life would take him in these first few stages of his acquaintance with Jesus? Do you suppose that Simon ever dreamed that his confession of faith would become the rock upon which Christ's church would be built? I guess not.

Who knows what wonderful things Christ will do in your life even as you in these first few stages of your acquaintance with him let down the nets of the gospel for a catch and share your faith with just one person this week.