

Let Down Your Nets!

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me again to Luke chapter 5 and 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. Well, I'll never forget it. I guess I was about five or six years old at the time. I was a young boy and my father said to me, come on, my loon.

He was from Aberdeen after all. Let's go for an evening's fishing. Let's go for an evening's fishing. So he took his fly rod and he gave me an old spinning rod and together we spent the evening fishing on the river Brora.

Him catching beautiful brown trout with his fly rod and me catching nothing but midgie bites with my hook and worm. I was never as proud as I was when I spent an evening fishing with my dad.

[1 : 12] You can call it what you like, father-son time or male bonding. That evening he taught me how to cast a rod, where to put my finger on the line, how to bring the rod back behind my head, and when to let my finger go.

When, not if, we get our new building, we're going to have a new fishing boat from which to fish for the souls of Glasgow's peoples. Last week we saw a place where we will hear the voice of Jesus, we'll hear the call of Jesus, and from which we shall fish for Jesus.

My aim really was to add a little excitement into our apprehension. Today I want to add more excitement, as together we view our new church building as a place we'll go fishing with Jesus.

But just as one of the most special nights of my life was spent fishing with my dad, so we'll have many enjoyable and memorable times of fishing with Jesus from our new building.

Well, if I can never forget going fishing with my dad, from Luke chapter 5, verses 1 through 11, the disciples of Jesus never forgot the events of this day.

[2 : 34] For as long as he lived, I'm sure Peter remembered that first feeling of utter astonishment at how Jesus had given him and his companions such a miraculous catch of fish.

I want us to notice two things this morning, two things which I hope and pray will be true for us as we go fishing with Jesus from our new home. First, it will be a place for Jesus to teach by word.

And second, it will be a place for Jesus to teach by faith. First of all, it will be a place for Jesus to teach by word.

To teach by word. Our passage begins with Jesus and a crowd. It's a huge crowd. It's such a big crowd that, in fact, Jesus was hemmed in and pressed.

There just wasn't room enough for people to see him and hear him, and especially if in true Jewish rabbinic style, he didn't stand to teach but sat down.

[3 : 37] And so he got onto one of the boats, the boat which belonged to Simon Peter. And having put that boat a little bit out from the shore, he started teaching people from the boat.

Who knows when Simon Peter's boat had been built and who built it? But I guess that its builders would never have guessed that the Son of God, Israel's Messiah King, would ever sit in that boat and teach from it.

Chances are, we probably will not be buying an old church building. We'll probably be buying something that was never a church building and making it into one.

What set Simon Peter's boat apart wasn't that it looked different from any of the other boats. What set it apart was that Jesus blessed it with his presence.

Our new building may not look a whole lot different from many of the other buildings in the city center of Glasgow. But what will set it apart is that Jesus will bless it with his presence.

[4 : 52] For a few hours that day, Simon Peter's boat became the world's greatest cathedral, the most magnificent temple to the glory of God, of far more grandeur than had its temple in Jerusalem.

And why is that? It wasn't because the boat had golden oars, but because Jesus blessed it with his presence. That's what we're praying for.

Not a grand fishing boat from which it is impossible to fish. Not an ornate cathedral which depends upon its grandeur to induce within its worshippers a sense of the divine.

But something grander and more glorious altogether. A boat like Simon Peter's which Jesus will bless with his divine presence and shine upon with his favor.

Now you all know I love ornate cathedrals. I could sit in the cathedral all day just soaking up the ambience. But if that is what we are depending on to induce within us a sense of the divine, let me suggest that we are in danger of straying from our reformed faith into the aesthetics of paganism.

[6 : 11] But it's what Jesus did from Peter's boat which is truly wonderful. We read in verse 3 he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

Not only was the world's cathedral a small fishing boat but the world's greatest pulpit was there also as Jesus, the Son of God, Israel's Messiah, King taught the people.

People travel from thousands of miles away to visit St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh where John Knox and Robert Bruce preach so powerfully. People travel from even further away to visit Geneva and the pulpits of John Calvin and the other great reformed heritage sites of Europe.

I personally love visiting the the small ruined church in Anwath in Galilee in Galilee where the 17th century Puritan Scottish Puritan preacher Samuel Rutherford worked.

One visitor to his church said that when Samuel Rutherford preached he preached on the love of Christ to the extent that I thought he would fly out of the pulpit while I sit in the silence of his ruin beside where he preached those sermons on the love of Christ and I listened to the wind howling through the bricks and imagine what Samuel Rutherford's voice sounded like and what he must have said to his people about the love of Christ.

[7 : 55] what stories those blessed stones in Anwath could tell. What blessed stories the wood of Simon Peter's boat could tell.

It would tell of how its creator spoke of the newness of the kingdom of heaven therefore repent and believe the gospel. It would tell of how Jesus is proclaiming God's love to the lonely God's hope to the despairing God's light to the blind God's voice to the deaf and God's forgiveness to the guilty.

How wonderful that the son of God should elevate such a common thing as a fishing boat to become the world's greatest ever pulpit. Yes, that is why we want a new fishing boat because ultimately when God's word is being proclaimed it is the risen and exalted Jesus Christ who is preaching and teaching through us.

How wonderful a thing it is that Jesus should elevate our new building wherever it is and whatever it should be to become a great pulpit of his love and his grace.

our building will be a place for us to fish for the souls of Glasgow's peoples but only because in the first instance it will be a place for Jesus to fish for the souls of Glasgow's peoples.

[9 : 29] As his word is preached his gospel is proclaimed it's as if he is sitting on our boat how blessed the thought and teaching from the shoreline casting his nets as it were across all the crowds from our boat.

What a privilege it is for us to be part of Jesus' purpose and plan that Glasgow should flourish by the preaching of the word of God and the praising of his name.

A place for Jesus to teach by word second a place for Jesus to teach by faith a place for Jesus to teach by faith well having addressed the crowds from verse four onwards Jesus turns his attention toward the fishermen whose boats he was using remember that the boat he was using had been only a few yards offshore far enough to put space between Jesus and the crowd but not so far so the crowds couldn't see him or hear him but now he says to Peter put out into the deep let your nets down for a catch it's such an evocative phrase don't you think put out into the deep let down your nets for a catch and they say to him Jesus don't you know that we're experienced fishermen we've been working hard all night we've caught nothing don't you know that there are no fish anywhere near us right now that we can catch yes and maybe we've imbibed more of the disciples cynicism and skepticism than we'd all care to admit for 50 years here we have worked so hard at evangelism and mission but with so few results we've prayed we've worked we have given sacrificially what will be so different now and yes maybe you're right to be cautious but ours is only to obey the exciting command of

Jesus put out into the deep go beyond your comfort zone and let down your nets for a catch well the other thing about this this command is that in general you know fish fish weren't caught in deep water fish were always caught near to the shore think about that we don't have we don't have an awful lot of time to go into this today but where Jesus calls us to go to catch fish for him it may not be our logical choice to me town head seemed a logical choice that is after all when a great number of un-evangelized people live but clearly it wasn't Jesus choice at the time what would you rather keep on fishing where you think the fish are or go to where Jesus chooses for us anyway back on topic we're talking about how the

Lord Jesus will teach about his gospel not just by word but by giving us practical demonstrations of the situations in which we need to trust him and have faith in him when Jesus when Jesus says put out your nets in the deep water he is providing us with an opportunity to see how he can provide for us to astonish us and to use us and I we're taking we're taking calculated risks for his name and for his glory but as we do so we will grow in faith as we see him work in us and through us we'll learn first of all that Jesus can provide for us he can provide for us when Jesus calls us to put out into the deep and do something for him that seems to the rational part of our brains to be rather foolish well one of the first objections we'll raise is one of resource and provision how will we do this what will happen if we should put out into the deep in obedience to what we sense is God's call to us as a congregation here in Glasgow

[14 : 07] City what will we do if nothing happens we're worried that there'll be a lack of fruit for the labour of our hands lack of fruit for the labour of our evangelism whatever we may go and whatever we should do yes and that may happen we may continue to toil all night catch nothing but this passage is urging us to trust Jesus that wherever he leads us he will provide for us Simon Peter having put down his nets for a catch in obedience to Jesus having let down his nets in such an inauspicious place deep water not shallow water fish aren't there and may I say it's such an inauspicious time because the time for fishing was in dark nights not during the day when the sun was out and the fish all dropped to the bottom he let down his nets and he brought up such a large load of fish that his nets were beginning to break he had to get other fishermen to come and help him to load all the fish he caught into the boats and you know

Simon Peter was doing all the wrong things in all the wrong way at all the wrong time in all the wrong places such as the sovereign power of Jesus that for weeks and for months through the sale of these fish in the marketplace all his needs were provided for this passage is urging us to trust Jesus that wherever he leads us he will provide for us he'll provide both the resources we need to do his work and he will even provide the fish to swim into our nets the important part is our faithfulness to his call to put out into the deep and let down our nets for a catch in our faithfulness to Jesus is our fruitfulness for Jesus in our faithfulness to Jesus is our fruitfulness for Jesus let's never doubt that he can provide what he's commanded you know the free church is famous worldwide for its singing of the psalms the most famous of which of course is psalm 23 we all know it don't we the Lord is my shepherd

I shall not want or as we render it in the singing psalms the Lord is my shepherd no want shall I know ah well we sing that very well that verse but it's one thing to sing it well but it's another thing to believe it for us to believe that the Lord is our shepherd and how he provides for all our needs to the extent that I shall know no want or no want shall I know it is really another thing altogether to believe that he can provide for us when the way ahead seems so confused because he's telling us to do something which seems rather illogical to us but you know to master psalm 23 is to believe it for ourselves that he will bless our faithfulness with fruitfulness and mission that the sheer number of fish we will catch will be so very great that we will need help to disciple all those who want to follow

Jesus for themselves we're going to learn that Jesus can provide for us we're going to learn that Jesus can astonish us secondly Jesus can astonish us as you go through the gospels you get the impression that Peter was a little bit of an emotional roller coaster the spiritual equivalent of the grand old Duke of York when he's up he's up when he's down he's down yes and maybe he was and maybe there's many of us who are just like Peter capable of incredible acts of devotion immediately followed by outstanding aberrations but for all that Peter and those who were with him that day were nothing less than astonished at the catch of fish they had taken the word that Luke uses for astonish is a rather unusual word in Greek and according to the Greek dictionary it means this a state of astonishment brought on by exposure to an unusual event frequently associated in classical

Greek writings and Luke's a classical Greek scholar with the activity of transcendent forces or beings in other words Luke uses this word astonished because he wants us to know heaven had come to earth that day Peter and his companions were amazed by the supernatural nature of the event they had just taken part in such as the large catch of fish at that time of the day in the deep water it wasn't just unusual it was impossible it's that sense the astonishment here is that sense of the holy what one German theologian called tremendous mystery and fascination tremendous mystery and fascination the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and you know you're in the presence of the supernatural same astonishment we read a few verses earlier in Luke 4 36 when Jesus expelled a demon from the synagogue same sense of otherworldly amazement we read in

[20 : 03] Acts chapter 3 verse 10 when in the name of Jesus Peter healed the lame man of the gate beautiful it's otherworldly and Peter falls to his knees in shocked astonishment that's what happens when Jesus astonishes you catches you I was playing football a number of years ago free church conference many of my colleagues are an awful lot fatter than I am and I ran and collided with one of them and man I really badly bruised my rib for weeks afterwards whenever I breathed in or out that sharp pain caught my chest and I thought I'm never playing football with that guy again sometimes the supernatural holiness of Jesus his sublime majesty catches you and at times like that it's just it's just impossible to stay standing you have to fall to your knees in utter astonishment and absolute amazement the hairs on the back of your neck are standing up straight such as the oppressive power of the love of the son of God for you and its impact upon you isn't just just physical and emotional its first impact is spiritual like Isaiah who fell to his face before the vision of the glory of God in Isaiah 6 we looked at that a while ago and John who fell to his face before the vision of the exalted glory of the risen

Christ in Revelation 1 so Peter falls to his knees before the supernatural glory of Jesus and he falls to his knees and so far from being proud of his own achievements and catching so many fish that day he says depart from me for I'm a sinful man oh Lord this is how you know that this is a true work of God when its impact results in deep contrition and repentance that sense of personal guilt before a holy God that sense of a need of Jesus forgiveness and transforming power well I can't say that I ever felt like that when I went fishing with my dad all those years ago but I can say that I felt like that before when I have met with the spirit of the living Christ not pumped up like Popeye and laughing like an idiot afraid to keep on breathing lest one of my breaths should be offensive to my heavenly father and that he should remove his presence from me and I think the word astonishment is the best word to describe it well I cannot promise you this experience every time you come to church but as we sit under the preaching of the word of God week by week our awareness of astonishment the sovereign power and love of Jesus will grow and grow especially as we realize that it was this

Jesus this Jesus who gave himself for us upon the cross it'll catch us like a bruised rib when we hear the word of the gospel and we'll learn to breathe for him we'll learn that Jesus can astonish us and then lastly we'll learn that Jesus can use us that he can use us you know there's so much about this passage we could speak about and pray through especially in this particular area of Jesus teaching us by faith of Jesus flexing our spiritual muscles and challenging us to do things that we never thought possible like catching such a load of fish in deep water at that time of the day he pushed these fishermen outside their comfort zone see what happens when you get pushed outside your comfort zone likewise at this time he is pushing us away from everything that is familiar and comfortable for us wait and see what will happen if we should trust him and follow him where he'll lead us but as we close I want to do so on what by grace I find one of the most amazing features of this passage namely that

Jesus chooses to use these fishermen in his mission remember who Jesus is he is Israel's Messiah King the Son of God had he so chosen he could have caused this great multitude of fish which the disciples caught to jump out of the water have a little episode of Strictly come dancing on the surface of the lake and then walk onto the land he didn't need these fishermen to accomplish his purpose God in the flesh click his fingers and it happens he didn't need them he didn't need their nets he didn't need their hooks he didn't need their boats but he chose to use them to catch all these fish and in fact he used them to catch these fish because he wanted them wanted to reassure them that when they go fishing for people he'll give them a catch among people also that's the point is it not that Jesus causes all these fish to swim into the disciples net because he wants to assure them that when he sends them out on the mission of catching souls for him he'll give them all the success they need he'll make them fruitful in their man fishing and so in his grace and by his sovereign will he's going to choose to use emotional roller coasters like Simon

Peter sons of thunder like James and John and relative nobodies like Andrew he's going to use these kinds of people to catch the souls of countless men and women throughout the centuries for him stretching down to this day he will use us if we will but listen to his voice calling us to put out into the deep and let down our nets for a catch in short if we are but willing to trust him and leave behind the comfort zone and follow him whatever he leads he'll use us whoever we are whatever age we are whatever gender we are whatever temperament we are some of us are emotional roller coasters we're up and down some of us are emotional merry-go-rounds we just go round and round some of us have got more hang-ups than a wardrobe he is far more interested in your availability than in your ability you know

[27 : 33] I wish my dad was still alive I wish I could just spend one more evening fishing in the river Barora with my dad thing is Jesus lives and reigns and through the pursuit of a new fishing boat to call home he is inviting us to go fish with him the question is this who wants to go with Jesus fishing up to go