

Obey Christ's Word

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[0 : 00] Turn again to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 5. It's a very well-known incident of the great catch of fish.

Really from verse 4. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets.

And so on then in verse 8. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. And down to verse 11.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. I remember as a young boy, somebody who was steeped in the Bible and Bible stories, that this certainly was one of my favorite.

From the time I was a little boy, I always had a passion for boats and for fishing from as young an age as I remember. And there was something about this story that always caught my imagination.

[1 : 20] But it's a story in the experience of the disciples and that highlights so much about our Lord, that grips us, doesn't matter what age we are.

And we find it's a story that is so, so full of many, many spiritual lessons for us. And we find very simply that we find on one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God.

And I love that. That's the way it was then. The crowds were gathering to hear the word of God. There was something about Jesus that had arrested the public. And they couldn't hear enough of him at this particular time.

They wanted to hear more and more. And so he's standing right at the edge of the loch in Gennesaret. And there he saw the two boats by the loch. And the fishermen had gone out of them. And they were washing their nets, preparing for the next time that they would go out, obviously. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land.

[2 : 27] Now, so we find this, that Jesus goes out and he preaches from the boat. These men had been fishing. We read about that. They'd been fishing. They weren't fishing just for leisure or just for pleasure.

They were fishing because it was their livelihood. And there's nothing more, even if you just go out fishing for leisure and you catch nothing, you always feel a wee bit down.

There's something about fishing that it either raises your spirits or leaves you despondent. Because if you go out, particularly if you go out two or three times and you don't catch anything, you always feel a bit down.

And yet, when you get a good catch, you always feel very upbeat about it. But it's a totally different thing if this is your livelihood, this is what you're depending upon, which is how it was for these men because they were fishermen by trade.

That's what Peter, James, John, were and Andrew. So we find that Jesus, he preaches from the boat and when he had finished preaching, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

[3 : 40] And it's here we find Peter's reaction. Straight away he says, Master, we've toiled all night and we've taken nothing. Straight away there is from Peter a reaction, a negative reaction to Jesus.

And he's really saying to Jesus, I know what you're saying, put out, but he says, really it doesn't, he's not actually saying it there, but I know what he's thinking.

He's really saying, it's pointless. He said, we have that. See what he says? He said, we've toiled all night and we've taken nothing. And there's an explanation marked behind.

You can see almost there's a mixture of shock, frustration, exasperation. And you can almost hear the idea that Peter is talking about here is, with all due reverence, Jesus, I know the tides, I know the run of the waters here, I know where the fish are and where the fish aren't, I know when they will be there and when they won't.

And we've been out all night and we have caught nothing. It is absolutely futile and pointless to go back out. Basically, that's how Peter is thinking. Because if there's anybody who knew the way and the waters around that area, it was Peter.

[5 : 02] But thankfully, he qualifies what he says by then adding, but he said, at your word, I will let down the nets.

And you know, to a certain extent, there is something like that within ourselves. Peter was very happy for Jesus to have the boat while Jesus was going to be preaching.

That was Jesus' work. Now, this isn't the first time that the Lord has met Peter, James and John. already he has identified them as people who are to follow him.

Already, he's got to know them. But at this stage, they haven't, as it were, come into full-time ministry or full-time discipleship or the following of Jesus.

We find that at the end. This was a momentous day in the life of these disciples. So it was at an earlier stage, this was kind of the lever, as it were, between their past life and what they were going into.

[6 : 05] So, Peter really is saying to Jesus, look, Lord, I know that, see, you had my boat and I was happy for you to have my boat and I was happy, Lord, for you to preach from the boat because that's what you do.

All the people wanted to hear you and I'm so proud that you used my boat for a pulpit to preach the word. But fishing, fishing's my business and I'm the one who knows really about the fishing.

That's almost what Peter is saying to Jesus. And sometimes in our own heart and lives we can, we're guilty of segregating the areas of our life where the Lord should be.

Sometimes we think, well, the Lord's domain is the Lord's day and the Lord's house and the Lord's word and in all these things he is Lord of these things. But we sometimes push the Lord out, we segregate the Lord, maybe not deliberately so but in practice sometimes that's what we do with regard to maybe our work, maybe our relationships, maybe different areas and aspects of our lives and we say, well, this is my, I'll look after this and we engage in it and work in it and maybe giving us it where a token gesture towards the Lord and sort of saying, well, Lord help me here and there instead of having Lord as Lord over our lives exclusively in every domain, everywhere.

And this was a lesson that Peter was going to have to learn. That the Lord was Lord of every aspect of his life or not really Lord at all.

[7 : 49] And it's a lesson that we have to learn as well because it's one of the, probably one of the more difficult lessons that we have to learn. And so, we find anyway that Peter says, as we said, thankfully he added, but at your word I will let down the nets.

And Jesus is here teaching a great lesson to the disciples and the lesson is here. The importance of obeying God's word.

Because, you see, these men were going to become fishers of men for Jesus. And Jesus right at the outset is teaching the most important lesson.

When you work for me, you will do things when I say and how I say it. And that was, this was the only way they were going to get success.

And they were going to get great success because Peter could have argued the point with Jesus and said, no, with all due respect, we're tired. We were out all night.

[8 : 57] We were just cleaning the nets. We're, if you don't mind, we'd rather just leave it be just now. Because, you see, they worked all night. So, these men will be tired.

This is probably they're just finished. Finishing up. They're washing the nets and they're ready to go for a bit of sleep. So, they could have brought in their own logic and say, well, look, this is how it is. But no, they don't. Peter is wise enough to know this is the Lord Jesus who's speaking. And so, he says, at your word, I will let down the nets. And that's why it's so important that we, that we give obedience to what God says.

Because, they were going to go and live for Jesus dependent on his word. And if they were going to become fishers of men, it was by following and obeying the Lord.

And so, the Lord is giving them a great lesson right here at the very, very beginning. And again, we see how God's word will often come in conflict with what we think and our logic.

[10:04] Peter's logic was this. There is no point, we've said this already, there's no point in going back out. The fish just won't be there. We're tired.

There's no point. God's word says, go back. And it's here we've got to, it's so important for us to take on board this, that God's word is going to be often in conflict with the way we feel, with the way we are.

Take, for instance, just naturally in life itself. God's word is always challenging us how we live. Even in the very area with regard to who we are with all the lusts that we have within ourselves.

The way we feel about certain things, the way we react to certain things, the way we normally and naturally are. God's word is so often coming to us and saying, put that to death.

Put that to death. Put that to death. And we say, oh no, I don't want to put that to death. That's the way we feel. And often there's this conflict going on.

[11:14] Sometimes we listen to God's word, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we push God's word aside. Sometimes we drown it out instantly and we pursue on with regard to our own lusts. But the thing is we won't prosper if we push God's word aside.

We won't know the full blessing, the communion, the success spiritually in this world. If we push things aside we have to listen to the word and give way to the word and accept this word.

Because sometimes as we say the word will go right against the way it is for you maybe even at present. Maybe we've often said that God's promises can be in right conflict with where you are in God's providence.

And sometimes God will ask you to do. Sometimes God will bring things upon your heart in a very powerful way. Say for instance you have the example of Philip.

God's word came to Philip and told him to go down into the desert. Now if you put yourself in Philip's shoes you might say to yourself why?

[12:26] I'm here as a missionary and I go into the cities to preach the word but why are you sending me away out into the desert? But Philip didn't know.

Away he went down into the desert. There's nobody around. It's strange. But then we know the story of how this wee chariot comes along with the Ethiopian eunuch on it.

And he's there and he's wrestling with God's word. And Philip is there and he preaches the word to him. You see God had a soul to be saved and that soul was going to be saved in the desert.

And Philip has to go all the way down there. Didn't know why he was going. And sometimes you will find in life as you go through it that this is how it will be.

There will be things you don't understand. But as long as we adhere to God's word and keep to God's word even although there might be disappointments and even although it's not working out the way we thought.

[13:29] And it often will not work out the way we thought. You know when we pray to God and ask the Lord to work out a particular situation when we hand something over to the Lord don't be surprised if he works it out a wee bit different to the way you expect it.

Because remember his ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. We have it worked out with regard to our own sort of little world. God sees the whole picture.

He knows the end from the beginning. And many of today's crushing disappointments and pains are all part of what will all come together.

And what God does it might be difficult it might be hard for some people here today to accept that. and I'm not minimizing your sorrow and pain but God works all things together for good to those who love him.

You might not as Jesus said to the disciples what I do now you don't know but you shall know hereafter. And that's often the case it's the hereafter it's later on it's further on.

[14:39] Right now it might not make sense to you. Right now it might be breaking your heart but the Lord says you will know hereafter at another point later on.

And so we find that Peter says at your word I will let down the nets. At your word. And of course we know that it's God's word in the first place that calls us.

Everything of course is by God's word. It's through the word that we began to follow the Lord. We read about how Jesus says to the different disciples follow me.

And you say to yourself if a voice had come from heaven and I heard I came to church and I heard this voice follow me it would have been easy. I would know then I'm a Christian.

You know that's exactly how it has been. The Lord has said to you through his word follow me. And if you're a Christian today it is in response it is by faith it is through grace you are saved.

[15 : 48] Remember that that is how it works. And that is how you have begun to follow him. By grace you are saved through faith. By faith you and by God's grace you responded to this follow me.

In the experiences that you went through it might have taken a long time. You might not even be able to identify and say on that particular day that's when I heard the voice of Jesus to say follow me and I began to follow him.

You might not have ever the whole length of your life be able to say at what point you began to follow Jesus but the point is this you are following him.

And even although you may say to yourself do I really follow him? Yes you do really follow him.

How do you know that? It's because there is nobody else you want to follow more than him.

Isn't that true? You look around the world at all the different isms all the different political parties whatever things you can go into all the different areas of life you can lift up any idol in this world that you wish and say to yourself who is it that I want to give my heart to above all.

[17 : 09] If you love the Lord the answer will be the Lord Jesus. Even although you might be saying you know I follow like Peter so often a far off.

I seem to be one of those who is walking with a limp. I seem to be one of those that the shepherd is always having to reach out and pull back to himself. But I'll tell you this there is nobody else in the whole wide world that I want to follow but Jesus.

Well let me tell you if that is the way your heart is it is because you are following him. Those who aren't following the Lord Jesus don't speak like that.

They don't think like that. They might think when they come to church they may think like that. They may think now and again like that. But if this is a predominant thinking of your life that it is this seeking Jesus, following Jesus, it is because Jesus through the Holy Spirit is working within your life.

So it is through the word that has come into your life, the word of God that has enabled you to believe, to hear this word and to follow him.

[18 : 25] And so we find then that Peter saying, Master, we toiled all the night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets. But prior to that Jesus had said to him, put out into the deep or launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

They were to become fishers of men. And you know, to a certain extent every believer is a fisher of men. You today, that is part and partial of what your life is about.

And you may feel and you may say to yourself, I must be the poorest fisherman or fisherwoman going. How on earth can I? Well, this is the amazing thing, is that God uses his people.

And God uses his people not only by what people say, but by the way people live, who people are, and the prayers of God's people.

And if you as a Christian look back over your life, and you look back to the influences for good that were upon your life, and as you look back and you see where you are today, you know that there were so many people had a little part to play along the way.

[19 : 49] It might have been the influence in your home, it might have been the influence of relatives, it might have been the influence of friends, it might have been the influence of a particular person in the village or community that you grew up in, it might have been, but there might be a number of influences.

And there might have been somebody who was praying for you, praying, praying, praying, praying. So all of this is part of the launching out into the deep. And that's what we are to do. We are to go out believing.

Because the Lord has told us that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. We might look out today and say, you know, it's bleak, we're living in bleak times.

We are. But the word has not said, the harvest is finished. The Lord is saying, the harvest is plentiful.

There are loads of people. As the Lord said to Paul in Corinth, Paul looked around this city, this city that was just steeped in every kind of wickedness going.

[20 : 58] He said, I've got many souls in this city. At that particular moment, it looked anything but. But that's what the Lord was saying to Paul. And we have to believe that the Lord is still working in this particular way.

Anyway, we know that Peter and the other fishermen, at the word of the Lord, they went out and they did. And they let down their nets. And we know the story, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their partners and the other boats to come and to help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But when Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, here was an amazing moment in Peter's life.

Because at that particular moment, Peter saw something in Jesus that he hadn't seen before. Oh yes, he knew he was the Messiah. But he hadn't recognized the full glory that belonged to Jesus. He saw something of the glory of who Jesus really was at that moment. Can I ask, how do you look on the Lord Jesus Christ today?

[22 : 17] Because you know, I believe everybody in here believes in Jesus in the sense that you believe intellectually. But have you responded to the claims of Jesus?

Because Jesus is making claims for your life and my life. And remember how C.S. Lewis, he summed it up and he was doing so reverently because he said there's only three alternatives about the claims of Jesus.

C.S. Lewis said either he was somebody who set out to deceive the world because the claims that he was making are really quite extraordinary.

So he's either somebody who has set out to deceive everybody. Or else he is somebody who is mad. Because the claims that he is making you would say is this of a madman?

Or else the third alternative which is the only one, everything he claims is true. C.S. Lewis said there's only three possibilities.

[23 : 32] either he's a deceiver, either he's mad, or he is exactly who he says he is. And if he is who he says he is, then it is us who are mad to turn away and to reject the claims of Jesus.

And that's where we're all facing. We have to face up to this. And if we believe and accept the claims of Jesus and yet turn away from it, then it is us who are mad.

We are making the most momentous wrong decision. But anyway, Peter, he falls in front of Jesus. But when Jesus saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Peter, say, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

You know, this is almost, it's quite an amazing thing. Every Christian can understand 100% what Peter is saying.

People who aren't Christians can't. The reason I say that is because only a person who has come to understand their own heart, the deceitfulness, the ugliness, the vanity, the pride, the lusts, that are all there.

[25 : 02] And then they have come to see Jesus as the great God of heaven and earth, the glory of the second person of the God.

When there is this meeting together of who he is and of who you are, you can understand the words of Peter. Have you not sometimes said to you, oh, you know this, I am so unclean.

Is it not true that sometimes when you can come, you might come into church and you might be under the word and it's when you come under the word there's this moment where you just feel, oh, I'm dirty.

I feel just so soiled in the presence of the Lord. You may be so conscious of it before but as you come under the word, you say, oh, I just feel so and you're saying, Lord, have mercy on me.

The last thing that Peter wanted at one level was for Jesus to depart and yet it's how he feels because he says, Lord, I'm just so unclean.

[26 : 09] You're so holy and me here in your presence. It's an Isaiah moment for Peter. When Isaiah had that vision, oh, woe is me for I am undone.

I am a man of unclean lips. Isaiah saw himself. You know, there was nobody in the history of Hebrew writing had lips as beautiful as Isaiah from a human point of view.

His language surpassed anything that is found in Hebrew literature. And yet he's saying in the presence of the Lord, I'm of unclean lips, woe is me, I am undone.

And that is how it is when we get a proper glimpse of the beauty and the glory and the holiness and the purity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we can identify with Peter because there is at that moment like a breaking in of the light into his heart. He has already come to know the Lord, but he's knowing him in a new way, at a new level.

[27 : 16] He is seeing things. And that's one of the things that the Lord always does when he comes into a soul. He brings light. It's the first aspect of the creation, first part of the creation.

In a moment God said let there be light. That was the first thing. It's the first thing in the new creation. Let there be light. Where light shines within our heart. We begin to see things.

You know how you could have sat for years and years under the word. And yet it's going in one ear and out the other. And you hear things sometimes, oh it makes you sit up and say, oh that's interesting.

But it doesn't stir your heart. It's just, and then all of a sudden, all of a sudden things begin to change. And you're seeing things you never saw before.

You're understanding things you never saw before. Why? Because of his light. It's his light shining in. It's opening your mind, opening your understanding.

[28 : 14] You're seeing things. let there be light. That's what the Lord does at the very beginning. And so we find here that Peter is saying, depart from me for I am a sinful man, oh Lord.

And they were all astonished. And you know, today as we look at this great Lord, we need to understand that he is eternal in his being.

it's an amazing thought because he transcends time. We find that very difficult to understand. But God transcends time.

He is time, there is a beginning for us, there is a beginning and there is an end. There is no beginning, there is no end with him. He is eternal in his being. Everything is as the one.

He is immutable. In other words, he is free from change. He cannot change. You either change for better or for worse. That's the only way.

[29 : 22] When we change, we change into becoming better at one thing or worse at a thing. Our lives are always changing in one way or another.

God is free from change. It is impossible for him to change. He cannot be any better than he is because he is perfect. he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He is omniscient. He knows everything. He knows every single thing. That's why he was able, he knew, well, he is not only omniscient, he is omnipotent.

Whether it was his omniscience or whether it was his omnipotence, his all knowing or his all power, that directed it might have been both. He might have just directed the fish.

to be there at that particular time, or he might have known that the fish were going to be there at that particular time. Either way, it doesn't matter. The point is that he is both of these things.

[30 : 23] He is all wise, he is all knowing. There is not one thing in your life ever from A to Z, but he knows it already, and knew it before ever you came into being, and knew it from all eternity.

We find that impossible to comprehend through experience, because so much of what we try and take on board has to come through our experiences.

But there's a lot, this is a wonderful thing about the Christian faith, is that faith takes us up to believe, and in believing we see things that are way beyond what we've actually experienced.

and that's where we accept these things, even although it's incapable for us to understand it through our own experience.

But this is the Lord. Do we understand that today, that this is the Lord who guided these fish, the Lord who knew exactly where they were to go? And it's a little wonder at the end of the day that they this is what they say at the end of the day, and when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

[31 : 42] They left everything. You know, I wouldn't be surprised, you know, Satan is never, ever, he was never far away from Peter, and he might have been around at that particular moment, I'm sure he was, and Satan might have whispered into the ear of Peter.

Hey, you're a good fisherman, you're quite an ambitious fisherman, Peter. How about doing it the other way around? See, Jesus, he's asking you to go with him.

How about you asking him to come with you to the fishing? See what you've just caught? You would become the most prosperous fisherman ever.

I wonder, this is pure speculation. I wonder if at that moment, Satan was tempting Peter. Because we know that Satan was somebody who was never far from Peter.

We find that, the minister's going through the life of Peter just now, and that's one of the things that we see, Satan is never too far away.

[32 : 53] Maybe he was whispering. But if that was ever a temptation, Peter never gave it any moment. They left all to follow Jesus.

Have you left all to follow Jesus? Is he number one in your life? Because he is worth following. There is nobody else in this whole wide world.

Nobody else who is eternal. Nobody else who tells the absolute truth. nobody else who is immutable. Nobody else who is all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful. There is nobody like Jesus. And he's saying, this is a wonderful thing, he is saying, it's not just that you know about me, and this marvelous being that I am. He says, I want to be part with you.

I want to share in your life. That's how it was at the very beginning. That's when Adam and Eve were made. It was for companionship, it was for fellowship, it was for walking in the garden together.

[33 : 59] I want to walk with you and share with you. Why hold me away? Because this is the invitation that is coming in the gospel. Will you leave everything else and follow him today?

Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we give thanks for the great gospel, we give thanks for the way that you speak to us through the word. And we pray that this word will become such a reality within our own experience.

And grant us the desire to know you more and more, that we might walk with you and discover all the blessings that are found in you. Oh Lord, our God, we pray with all who go out to preach today, we remember our students and we remember in particular those who are coming now to the end and will be looking to be placed to go where you will have them go.

Just like Jesus said to the disciples to follow me and they left all and followed. So we know there are those who have done just that and they are now to be guided by you to where they go.

Lord, grant them all the grace and the wisdom to know where you will have them go. And as the word goes out today being preached up and down our land, we pray that it might be a great day with rejoicing in heaven over sinners coming in repentance to you.

[35 : 27] Bless us, we pray, and do us good and take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.