

The Call of the Disciple

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- [0:00] Surely, among the sweetest blessings that are ours as disciples of Christ is that we are subject to a call. That is to say that our Lord has something for us to become and something for us to take up.
- Is that not surpassingly sweet? There is a person and a path that He foresees for us, that He draws us to by His summons.
- This is indeed very sweet, for among other things, it means that we are not left to ourselves to forage and flounder about to determine the shape and significance of our lives, but that it is given to us and can be discovered in answer to His call.
- It is with this topic of the call of Christ upon the disciple we shall begin together and do so by attending to a little cameo Luke provides us as to how for Simon Peter this call began to unfold.
- And particularly, we want to notice how in Simon's case it came, what in answering that call had to be overcome, and finally, what came of it.
- [1:32] Now, this is Simon's story, and each disciple's experience is its own. But Simon's reveals something of the weave of the fabric of Christ's dealings with all His disciples.
- Thus, it can orient us as to what we might expect in such a call as it comes to us. So, with that in our sights, let us turn to Luke's account.
- You will find it in Luke chapter 5, beginning verse 1. Luke chapter 5. On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on Him to hear the word of God, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.
- And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked Simon to put out a little from the land.
- And he sat down and he taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.
- [2:57] And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets.
- 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 to help them.
- And they came and filled both boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees saying, depart from me, 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, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.
- And Jesus said to Simon, do not be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to the land, they left everything and followed him.
- [4:13] First, how did Simon's call come?

What was its nature? Luke sets the scene for us on a lakeshore. The people, in their eagerness to hear Jesus, are pressing in and the surf is lapping at his sandals.

He spies a creative solution. He gets into a vacant fishing boat, bobbing at the shore. Simon's. And asks him to put out a bit. A perfect improv pulpit from which to teach.

It was in this context Simon receives his call. Notice three things about it. First, it is personal.

Jesus was speaking to the assembled. And Simon may have been one of them, listening in as he cleaned his nets. But at one point, Jesus turns from speaking to the crowd and addresses Simon directly.

[5 : 26] Verse 4. Put out into the deep. The call was not generic. It was personal. Jesus knew who Simon was.

It was not you there with the net. What was your name? No. It was Simon. Put out into the deep.

When Jesus' call comes to you, it will come to you personally. He will call you by name, knowingly.

Even if the context is words to a crowd. They are words he directs to you personally. The call is also personal in that it is adapted to you.

Who you are. Who God has made you to be up to that point. Simon was a fisherman. Jesus calls him to put out the boat.

[6 : 32] And it's a boat. Not put out the garbage. To let down a net. Not a drawbridge. Now this is not to say that Jesus' call will not burst old categories.

Later he will tell Simon he will be a fisher of men. But he always seems to build on what he has made us up to then.

Fisher of men. His call will take us to someplace new. But it meets us where and builds upon what we are.

Something else we notice about Simon's and I think every call. It is challenging. Put out into the deep, he tells Simon.

Surely an evocative word. The deep. Perhaps I betray my landlubber nature to remark that there is something a little unnerving to the word deep.

[7 : 42] Uttered in relation to water. That is where Jesus directs. Into deep water. Away from the shallows of security and predictability.

Out beyond the place of confident control. Into a place of venture and vulnerability. A place of possible peril.

But also of prospect. An arena of testing. Even terror. Winds, waves, storms and swells. But also of possible triumph and treasure.

Great cargos are gained across the deep. Many of us would be quite content to paddle peacefully within the littorals of life.

Within comfortable and comforting sight and reach of the land. Christ's call often comes to push us out of the shallows.

[8 : 49] To change the metaphor. Push us out of the comfy nests. To see what our wings are made of. Or better. To show what he can make of them.

Christ's call is a challenge. But it is also. A summons. Put out into the deep. Can seem like Jesus is sending Simon.

But remember. Jesus is in the boat too. Jesus has gotten into Simon's boat. And he was with Simon for the adventure.

So Christ's call. Is a summons. Put out into the deep. With me. Join me. Answering Christ's call.

Involves us in a joint venture. There are many things we would never contemplate undertaking alone. But we will not have to.

[9 : 54] For he will be in the boat with us. As we launch out at his bidding. The sweetness of this truth.

Grows over a lifetime. So this is how Christ's call came to Simon. It was personal.

Challenging. And involved a summons to join with Jesus. But what did this call. Have to overcome. For Simon to answer it.

To the call. Put out into the deep. And let out your nets for a catch. Simon replies. And you can catch his disposition.

And what must have been the tone of his response. There in verse five. Master. Master. We toiled all night. Christ's call.

[10 : 54] Met Simon in his weariness. To respond. Would require that he rally himself.

From his fatigue. Now. Most in this room. Are young. And know nothing of weariness.

Your life pulse runs rapidly. But for others among us. Our sands are lower. And it is tempting.

To slow to a coast. If his call finds us there. Let us stir ourselves. At the bugle's call.

And let's let our latter laps. Be our strongest. But more than from fatigue.

[11 : 51] Christ. Called him to stir himself. In a venture. He could not have doubted. Would be but futile. We have toiled all night.

And caught nothing. The fish aren't biting. We've tried. I know these things. I'm a fisherman. And since when does a fisherman.

Take fishing advice from a carpenter anyway? So Christ's call. As it came to Simon. Ran counter to all his judgment.

It makes no sense. His experience. His experience. I've tried and failed. It had to overcome his disposition.

Exhausted and done. I've already cleaned and put away my nets. And likely overcome looking foolish in front of his peers. Everyone knows the middle of the lake.

[12 : 53] In the middle of the day. Is the wrong place. In the wrong time to catch fish. I'd only be the laughing stock. All of these.

Are powerful dissuasives. To heeding Christ's call. And it's not unlikely. That when Christ's call comes to you. It will be circled about.

By a whole hive. Of buzzing objections. Very sober. And rational objections. But in Simon's case.

He overcame the whole host of them. Notice how. The next four words he uttered. Proved momentous.

They would change the course of his life. Verse 5. Nevertheless. Upon your word. Nevertheless.

[13 : 55] That is. Notwithstanding. All the sober objections. Fully acknowledging. And weighing up. All of the disincentives. In the face.

And force. Of all the dissuasives. Yet. Upon. Simon's response. Was grounded upon something.

It had a basis. There was a logic to it. It was not irrational. Or groundless. What was the basis? The grounding? What.

Could bear. All the weight. Of all the objections. And still stand. Upon. Your bidding.

Your bidding. He has told me something. Given me. A concrete word. I can act on.

[14:52] And that. I can act on. I can act on. And that. It is. Your bidding. Jesus. Is the one calling me. Here is a solid.

Two-fold foundation. Of a call. Sufficient. To overcome. All objections. He has given me a word. And it is he.

Who has given it. Let me ask you. What is it. That weighs in your scale.

The numerous sober dissuasives. Or can you say with Simon. Nevertheless. Upon your word.

Some of you perhaps. Have heard Christ's call. To venture out. In some endeavor. But the objections.

[15:50] Are many. And weighty. Oh friend. Cast. Jesus's credibility. Into the scale. And launch.

Some of you. Will have heard. That word of calling. Long ago. Recall it. And hear its echo. Afresh. And let the reminder.

Of who it is. Who gave it to you. Fortify you. To continue on in it. Finally.

Notice. What came. Of Simon's. Answering the call. Or we might ask it. This way. What would Simon. Have missed.

Had he not. Answered. Christ's call. At Jesus's word. Simon puts out. Into the deep. And casts out his net.

[16:51] And in a moment. The net. Is so full of fish. It starts to break. And as they haul him. Into the boat. There are so many fish.

The boat starts to sink. Can you picture. All those flopping fish. Can you feel. The adrenaline. I'd call that.

Adventure. When you say yes. To Christ. And follow him. Where he leads. I promise you. You will get.

Adventure. You will see. And be part of things. You would never see. Or do. If you. If you. For whatever. Prevailing reason.

Stayed in the shallows. As the psalmist put it. Some went down. To the sea and ships. Doing business.

[17:48] On the great waters. They. Saw the deeds. Of the Lord. His wondrous works. In the deep. When you launch out.

At his call. You will. Jump the rails. Of ordinary life. It will gather you up. Into. Astonishment. Verse nine.

Perhaps you'll be gathered up. Into an adventure. So big. It will require companions. It was so with Simon. Verse seven. Simon. Simon's obedience.

To the call. Opened up horizons. That his friends. Were drawn into. And they too. Were able to share. In the thrill.

And blessing. Of that sphere. Of adventure. Can't you see them. Looking up at each other. Amidst the commotion. Of the catch. Can you believe this?

[18:48] Can you believe this? Yes. I'm sure they thought. If they had a moment. For reflection. Among the flopping fish. This is the high point. Of my fisherman's life.

It couldn't get better. Than this. But if they thought this. They were wrong. As Jesus would tell them.

No. It gets even better. From now on. You will be catching people. Verse 10. This is one of those.

Goose bump inducing things. About Christ's call. No matter how good it gets. The best. Is always ahead.

Forever. Forever. I don't know how many fish. Simon caught that day. But he kept following that call. And one day.

[19:47] He would catch 5,000. People. As Acts tells us. And even that. Was not the apogee.

Of the adventure. For as we are told. Eye has not seen. Nor ear heard. Nor our heart. Imagined.

What God has prepared. For those who love him. Our. Call. Will spill out. Into eternity. An ever.

Expanding. And ever. Exhilarating. Horizon. There are perhaps. Some among us.

Who for our autumn. Or winter season. In life. May be tempted. To think. That our best days. Have come and gone. But for the disciple.

[20:44] Of Christ. This can never be so. You keep answering the call. And there will be no room.

For nostalgia. For the adventure. Will never peek. Behind you. It will ever. It will ever. Only. Move toward.

Greater. And greater. Grandeur. But Simon. Did not only get.

Adventure. In answering. Christ's call. He also got. Awareness. At least. At least.

Three epiphanies. Transpired. For Simon. In his boat. That day. There must have been. A moment. When Simon. Frantically.

[21:36] Scooping up. The fish. Realized. This is no. Ordinary. Occurrence. And then. A second.

Awareness. Broke upon him. This Jesus. Is more. Than I ever. Imagined. On the shore.

Simon. Had thought. Jesus. Worthy of his boat. And gave him. A title of respect. But out. Upon the deep. His awareness.

Of who Jesus. Was. Grew. Lord. He cries. Falling before him. Whatever.

Simon. Still. Did not grasp. Of Jesus. He knew. That he was. In the divine. Presence. Would you.

[22:34] Grow. In your knowledge. Of God. In Christ. Christ. Then answer his call. And launch out. Into the deep. With him. There.

You will have. Epiphanies. As to who he is. But. Simon. Upon the deep. Does not. Simply receive.

A greater. Awareness. Of Christ. He also. Gains. A deeper. Self. Awareness. No sooner.

Does he catch. A fresh. Glimpse. Of who. Christ. Is. Than he. Correspondingly. Sees. Himself. For who. He is. A sublime.

Trauma. Falls. Upon his soul. I am. A sinful. Man. Would you. Know yourself.

[23:31] Love. And surely. That is greatly. To be desired. For progress. And becoming. Requires. Telling us. The truth here. And not just.

Speaking. The truth. Of who you are. But a felt. Self. Knowledge. These are great.

Gains. A growing. Knowledge. Of God. And a growing. Knowledge. Of yourself. The two. Constituents. Of wisdom. As Calvin claims.

In the opening. Of his institutes. But. There was yet. Another. Precious. Awareness.
Simon. Received.

In answering. Christ's call. We might call it. An awareness. Of what. Is ultimately.
Worthwhile. There.

[24:30] On the deep. What. Counted. In life. Was clarified. Indeed. It was so. Vividly. Clarified.
For Simon. And his companions. That when they. Hit the shore. With. Incidentally. The
greatest. Catch. Of their lives. It. And everything. Else.

Scarcely. Mattered. Compared. To following. Christ. In his call. Nothing. Else. Had any
weight. As Luke.

Tells us. Verse 11. They left. Everything. And followed him. We might say.

They had discovered. The pearl. Of great price. Is worth.

[25:25] It was worth it. Would you. Settle. Forever. Decisively. The gospel. Proposition. That the
pearl.

Of great price. Is worth. The cost. Of discipleship. Answer. Christ's call. Launch. Out.

Into the deep. And you. Will clarify. That. Vividly. In your experience. This. Is greatly. To
be desired.

As. Haziness. Here. Hampers. Horrendously. So. Simon. Gained. Adventure.

And. Awareness. But. Along. With that. In answering. Christ. He also. Received. An
assurance. Verse 10.

[26:24] Jesus. Said. To Simon. Don't. Be afraid. Now. You. Might. Have. Thought. This.
Assurance. Was. Directed. At.

The terror. Of. The boat. About. To sink. In the deep. From the overflow. Of fish. But. It
seems. Rather. To be. Directed. At. Simon's. Fear. Of his.

Sinfulness. Sinking. Him. In the deep. Presence. Of Jesus. For it. Comes. To Simon. In
response. To his. Cry. Depart.

From me. For I am. A sinful. Man. Simon's. Terror. Stricken. Instinct. Is. Spot. On.

For this. Is. What we all. Really. Need. To be. Afraid. Of. And where we. Need. Assurance.
Most. Simon.

[27:19] Knew. His. Sins. Made him. Unworthy. Of such. Divine. Company. Thus. Jesus's. Don't.
Be. Afraid. Is. To say. Yes.

Simon. Your. Sinfulness. Does. Make. You. Unworthy. But. I. Have. Addressed. This.
This. Barrier. To. My. Company. That. You. Feel. And.

Just. As. Simon. Did. Not. Then. Fully. Grasp. Who. It. Was. Who. Could. Command.
Furtive. Fish. Into. An. Empty. Net. Neither. Could. He. Have. Known.

How. Or. What. It. Would. Cost. Jesus. To. Give. Simon. The. Assurance. In. Relation. To.
His. That.

The. Reason. Jesus. Could. Tell. Him. That. Despite. His. Many. And. Great. Sins. He.
Did. Not. Need. To. Depart. Was. That. One. Day.

[28:18] In. Noonday. Darkness. Jesus. Would. Receive. Those. Very. Words. From. The. Father.
Simon. Instinctively. Felt. Depart.

From. Me. Simon. Need. Not. Be. Afraid. For. Jesus. Would. Take. The. Fearsome.
Judgment. Simon. Sins.

Deserved. And. So. It. Is. With. All. Who. Follow. Him. In. Addressing. This. Greatest. Of.
All. Threats. The. Sinking.

Weight. Of. Our. Sin. His. Assurance. Comprehends. All. Our. Possible. Fears. Having. Dispatched.

The. Great. Fear. He. Will. Not. Neglect. The. Lesser. Fears. And. So. We. Can. Follow. Him. Into. Anything. Without.

[29:10] Fear. In. Answering. His. Call. And. Following. Him. We. Need. Never. Be. Afraid. How. Wonderful. Is.

This. How. Often. Are. We. Immobilized. By. Fears. But. We. May. Take. Jesus. Assurance. As.

A. Solvent. To. Any. And. All. Of. Our. Terrors. And. How. Does. This. Precious. Truth. Distill.

Into. Our. Souls. By. Answering. His. Call. To. Launch. Out. Into. The. Deep. And. Experiencing. All. Along. Our. Path.

Of. Following. How. Indeed. Because. Of. Who. He. Is. And. Does. For. Us. We. Need. Not. Be. Afraid. Come.

[30:03] What. May. I. Love. The. Picture. We're. Given. Of. How. Simon. Began. To. Feel. This. Assurance. And. How. It. Changed.

Him. John. Tells. Us. In. His. Gospel. In. Chapter. Twenty. One. That. Once. Again. Simon. Would. Be. In. A. Boat.

Fishing. And. Once. Again. Catch. Nothing. A. Voice. From. The. Shore. Would. Direct. Him. To. Cast. The. Net. On. The.

Other. Side. Once. Again. The. Net. Would. Straightway. Strain. Under. A. Miraculous. Catch. Of. Fish. John.

Who. Was. With. Him. Knew. Whose. The. Voice. From. The. Shore. Was. It. Is. The. Lord. Where.

[30:55] Once. In. The. Midst. Of. That. Miracle. Conscious. Of. His. Sinfulness. Simon's. Impulse. Was. To. Flee. From. Jesus. Now.

Equally. Conscious. Of. His. Sinfulness. He. Flies. To. Him. He. Will. Not. Even. Wait. For. The. Boat. To. Reach. The. Shore.

But. Leaps. Into. The. Water. To. Swim. To. Jesus. No. Longer. Afraid. One.

Final. Aspect. Of. This. Assurance. Simon. Received. Is. It. Not. Interesting. With. What. It. Is. Coupled. Don't.

Be. Afraid. From. Now. On. You. Will. Be. Catching. People. An. Odd. Linking. It.

[31:52] Seems. Jesus. Is. Saying. I. Am. Not. Simply. Despite. Your. Sinfulness. Taking. You. Into. My. Presence. But.

Into. My. Very. Purpose. I. Have. Come. To. Seek. And. To. Save. The. Lost. And. You. Too. Will. As.

Part. Of. That. Mission. Be. Catching. People. Not. Fish. I. Have. So. Addressed. The. Barrier. That. You. Will. Not. Only.

Abide. This. Encounter. With. Me. But. From. Now. On. Shall. Be. My. Fellow. Laborer. Friends.

Is. That. Not. A. Crowning. Assurance. You. Will. Be. My. Fellow. Labor. In. The. Mission. In. Which. I. Came. Down. From. Heaven.

[32:46] Oh. Friends. It. Is. Easy. To. Live. Our. Lives. Pleasantly. Paddling. About. In. The. Seeming.

Safety. Of. The. Shallows. Have. You. Heard. A. Call. To. Put. Out. Into. The. Deep. Can.
You. Hear. His. Voice. Beckoning.

You. To. Join. Him. For. A. Catch. Answer. The. Call. And. Launch. Out. With. Him. And.
Yours.

Like. Like. Simon. Will. Be. An. Endless. Adventure. An. Ever. Deepening. Awareness.
And.

An. All. Encompassing. And. Everlasting. Assurance. Don't. Miss. Out. When. You. Hear.

[33:37] The. Call. Launch. Out. Turn. Want.

Like. ■■■ Destiny.