

Transcript

The Jesus Story - Miracle Catch of Fish

When we read Luke's gospel, we need to try and understand just what Luke is trying to convey to us.

Luke is simply trying to tell us as much as he possibly can, about who Jesus was, and what He came to do. It would perhaps help us if we knew a little more about Luke the man and why he wrote his gospel.

Luke was by nationality a Greek and by profession he was a doctor, and he must have really must have loved to write. When we count the actual number of verses Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other person. He wrote both the gospel of Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles.

Although Luke never met Jesus in person, he did very exhaustive research and must have conducted a good many in-depth interviews, because in his Gospel account he clearly reveals Jesus' great heart of compassion, and he includes parts of Jesus' life and teaching that are not in the other Gospels.

Luke addressed his gospel (as well as the book of Acts) to someone called Theophilus. He was thought to be a Gentile official of some kind who believed in Jesus. Luke wanted him to have an orderly account of the life Jesus, one that would give him confidence that what he had heard concerning Jesus was the truth.

We find this in Luke's opening remarks; this is how Luke begins his Gospel:

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.

4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

The Gospel of Luke unfolds the life of Jesus as if he was making a film of His life. It begins with His ancestry and birth; it continues through His earthly ministry right up to His death on the Cross, and comes to a climax in the Resurrection.

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles Luke records How the work of Jesus continued in the church through the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is then devoted to the presentation of the person of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world.

Luke's Gospel has several main themes:

- Jesus Christ is presented as the Saviour of the world.
- He is the friend who stands with the poor and powerless, with the sick and the broken-hearted.

- Luke emphasizes the community setting of Jesus' life and work.
- Women play a prominent role in this gospel.
- The Holy Spirit is given an important place.
- But, most important of all is the reason Jesus came to earth: to give his life as a ransom for the sinners he came to save.

Do you know, even today, after two thousand years, Jesus remains the greatest changer of lives that there has ever been. No one has cured more addictions, restored more broken marriages, or repaired more lives from damaged childhoods than this former carpenter from Nazareth.

Right up to today we find that Jesus has proved to be the last hope for those who have lost hope. What I would like to do today is to pick up from last time when we looked at chapter four. This is where finished last time in verse forty, and it is well worth reading the last few verses again:

40 When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.

41 And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ.

At sunset they brought to Jesus those who were sick and those who were possessed with demons, and Jesus put forth his divine power to heal. This sentence is amazing. He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. The touch of that Divine hand communicated health to their bodies:

42 Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them;

43 but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."

44 And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

That is where chapter four finished, so we pick the story up again today In Verse 1 of Chapter 5. Verse 1 tells us that the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God.

His fame as a great teacher was now firmly established. Whenever the people heard that he intended speaking in public, a crowd would gather quickly round him, whether in the synagogues, or by the lake-shore, or in the market-place.

By this point in Luke's record, Jesus' public ministry was in full swing. In this chapter Jesus goes about building a team of followers - followers who become the first Christian missionaries after Jesus leaves the earth.

Here we can see, Jesus was extremely popular during His earthly, preaching ministry. So much so that the crowds gathered around him to hear the word of God.

On this occasion he stood by the Lake of Gennesaret (Galilee) as he taught by the quiet lake waters, the crowd was so great that he borrowed the fishing boat of one of his friends, and just pushing out from the shore, He spoke to the crowd.

Now, in the first eleven verses of chapter five we have the record of the First Miracle Catch of Fish:

1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.

3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

Peter freely lends his boat as a platform for a preacher. Jesus chose to speak to the people from the boat so that He could talk to them without being crowded too closely. They pushed it out; and then Jesus sat in the boat and spoke to the people as they stood on the shore.

After He had finished speaking to the people He sent them away, and said to Simon Peter:

“Put out into the deep water and let down your nets.”

Peter has a few doubts about Jesus' ability as a fisherman, but this was Peter's reply:

“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

The disciples and the crowds had seen Jesus perform miracles before this, but this time, something is about to happen that will be an exercise of Peter's faith, and be the beginning of a new relationship that the early disciples have with Jesus.

It is evident that Peter and his fishing partners knew Jesus since they all lived in the same area, and Peter agreed to take Jesus out in his boat.

After finishing His teaching, Jesus tells him to let down his nets to fish. Peter is reluctant at first and with good reason: he was, an experienced fisherman; they had been out all night and had caught nothing; How could this rabbi instruct him about fishing?

It was the wrong time to fish. The time to fish was at night into the early dawn. It was the wrong place to fish. The deep waters were not where the fish were in this lake. It was inconvenient; Peter had finished cleaning and storing his nets ready for the next day.

It was demanding. Peter and the others had just put in a hard night of work and needed to be at home resting, not sailing about looking for fish at the direction of some religious teacher.

It could be embarrassing. The entire village was watching what was about to happen. If he caught nothing again he would be ridiculed by the other fishermen.

Jesus told Simon to take Him out to the deep water to do some fishing. This statement would probably astonish these seasoned fishermen. Jesus was taking Simon out to where there would be the least possibility of catching fish, taking them back to where they had already failed to find a catch. Simon may have thought: “this man may be a good preacher, but he doesn’t know a thing about fishing!”

Peter is certain that to go back out into the deep water is a waste of time and effort, and Jesus is going to be embarrassed by the action he is about to take, so Peter tries to warn him.

After preaching to the crowd, Jesus asked Peter to “put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch” (verse 4). Peter’s attitude is typical when we think a novice is telling him how to do his business, Peter is the experienced fisherman; Jesus is just a handyman. Peter has been out all night; Jesus had just got into the boat.

Peter has not caught anything all night; Jesus thinks he knows the best place to fish is. Peter is the one who has to row even though he is tired from working all night. So you can well imagine Peter’s attitude. But, Jesus is the rabbi, so Peter is going to humour him. He says, “If you say so, I’ll let down the nets.”

I don’t think that Peter expected to see what we read in verses 6 and 7. This would have been a strange request in the minds of the fishermen, because this was their occupation and they had been unsuccessfully fishing all night (Luke 5:4-5).

Fortunately for Simon Peter and the other fishermen, they were actually talking to the One who made the sea and everything within it. So, He would have expert knowledge even beyond the experience of Peter and the other fishermen. If anyone knew how to catch fish, it was the Jesus!

Even though Simon Peter could not understand how trying to fish again at Jesus’ command would work, He obeyed the voice of the Lord anyway (Luke 5:5). This is where we must commend and imitate Simon Peter. The lesson we learn from Simon is that we will not understand everything that God commands us to do, but we obey these commands anyway.

Remember, this life is not about pleasing ourselves, but to please God instead (Romans 12:1-2).

This event was doubtless amazing. These were experienced fishermen. With all their experience they had caught nothing in a whole night of fishing. But at the first attempt, doing what Jesus said, they caught enough fish to nearly sink two boats.

Peter, James, and John were qualified enough to appreciate the nature of fishing on this sea. No doubt it was rare that a single catch would catch enough fish to nearly sink two boats, but it would be especially amazing to do so on the very first try after a night of catching nothing!

Either Jesus knew miraculously where the fish were, or else He miraculously caused them to come to that place. In either case, it gave the men confidence that they should always obey Jesus’ instructions.

Something about listening to Jesus bringing the “word of God” and watching him bring in two boatloads of fish brought Peter to new a realization about Jesus and

about himself. Suddenly it didn't matter whether they were able to haul all the fish on board. In the face of Jesus' grace and power, all Peter could do was to fall down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

But Jesus responded quickly to replace Peter's fear with hope. Jesus knew about Peter's sin, of course, but that didn't matter, it didn't prohibit Peter from being a vital part of Jesus' ministry. With Jesus' power Peter had caught fish. Soon with the same power he would capture men to follow Jesus.

The fishermen were so impressed by Jesus' miracle that they made a commitment to him. They left their huge haul of fish, their boats, and their nets to follow him. Jesus rewards our obedience by giving us a deeper understanding of who he is:

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Here is a thought! Jesus could only give them what their nets could hold without bursting and their boats could carry without sinking. Stronger nets and bigger boats would have enabled Jesus to give Peter even more.

Luke wants us to grasp that there are no limits to the work of God's Spirit in the world except for those that he finds in us. We need to play an active role in this partnership. That's why Jesus calls Peter to leave his boats behind to learn how to follow his example.

When we compare the way we try to accomplish things with what God can do through us when we allow him too, there is simply no grounds for such a comparison. This is where Simon found himself. Simon instantly changed from an attitude of ignorant arrogance to one of informed admiration.

His testimony revealed that he felt unworthy, to even be in the presence of this teacher and Rabbi, One who commanded such power: power over the word, power over sickness and sin, even power over nature.

Jesus used the catch in the boat to illustrate to the fishermen, and to us, what God intends to do in our lives. Jesus wasn't trying to impress the fishermen with His power. He was illustrating to them what God can do when something is used for His purpose.

Jesus was showing the fishermen that He was going to do with them the same thing he did with the boat: use them to be witnesses of God's grace through Jesus and in doing so, to reap a harvest of souls.

God did use Peter, James and John to bring many people to Jesus. These three formed an inner circle in the group that would be called as Apostles, and Jesus often taught them and revealed to them truths that were not heard or seen by the other Apostles.

Nothing like this had ever been witnessed. What is the purpose of a fishing boat? It is simply to catch fish. What happens when God uses the fishing boat to catch fish? He catches LOTS of fish, a catch that is beyond anything we could ever believe without seeing it for ourselves.

This is a very different career choice and a very unlikely one: Simon, Andrew, James and John were uneducated and simple fisherman who lived their lives on and by the sea. They were rough and coarse and not the kind of men who would easily follow anyone. But when Jesus called them, they left the biggest payday of their lives lying on the shore and followed Jesus!

This is worth thinking about! If we give the use of the things we have to God, and act upon His direction rather than our own, He can do great things with them, things that are far beyond both our ability or our expectations.

After that miracle this is what we read in verse 11:

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

When Jesus called those early disciples into full time ministry, they instantly obeyed, and forsaking all they began to follow Him; Jesus now begins their training as His Apostles.

Up until this time these men have continued with their jobs as fishermen and followed Jesus as disciples. But now Jesus calls on them to leave everything to be with Him full time. These men left their homes, jobs, and families in order to follow Jesus!

This is not talking about us abandoning our responsibilities today, but instead showing us how to prioritize our lives and centre upon serving God above all things in this life.

The Disciple is a pupil or learner who follows a Master and learns from him, and this does most certainly included all of the men and women who first followed Jesus.

The Apostle is a Messenger, one who has been sent by the Master to convey his message. This is the office that Jesus was choosing these men for and this is why they were very, very special.

All of us are Disciples of Christ: we are learners and followers, but these twelve men were the messengers, the Apostles who had a message they learned directly from the Master.

None of us will ever be able to qualify to be apostles, there were only twelve of these and they had been trained and commissioned by Jesus himself, but we are all called

to be followers of Jesus; we could spend a great deal of time to study just what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

We only have time to today to look at what are the lessons that we can learn about following Jesus from these first eleven verses of chapter five. The main character is Simon Peter, and we can learn a few things from just how he reacted to the situation that he found himself in. In verse three we read:

3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

Peter freely lends his boat as a platform for Jesus to preach to the people that were gathered to hear Him on the seashore. Peter did not hold back, this was Peter's boat, but if Jesus had need of it, it was his just for the asking. Then in verse four we read:

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

This was going to be real test for Peter. This experienced fisherman had toiled all night and caught nothing. Peter may have had a few doubts about Jesus' ability as a fisherman, but this was his reply:

"But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.""

The lesson we learn from Simon is that we will not understand everything that God commands us to do, but we obey these commands anyway.

Verse six tells us:

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

This is something to think about. Jesus could only give them what their nets could hold without bursting and their boats could carry without sinking. Stronger nets and bigger boats would have enabled Jesus to give Peter even more.

Luke wants us to grasp that there are no limits to the work of God's Spirit in the world except for those he finds in us. We need to play an active role in this partnership.

Finally, just look at the impact that this had on Peter:

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Just look at the gracious response from Jesus:

10 And Jesus said to Simon: "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Notice, the Bible says the fishermen “forsook all” to follow Jesus. This meant they left everything they had to follow Jesus and that is the commitment that the Lord expects from us.

Does that seem to be a high price to pay? That is nothing compared with His commitments to us:

He left the Splendour of Heaven

Knowing His destiny

Was the lonely hill of Golgotha

There to lay down His life for me.

There is one thing that I think we really need to understand: we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians church puts things into perspective. In Ephesians chapter two this is what we read, we have been chosen:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, We have nothing to boast about

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. And we have a job to do

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.