

Session 1

January 14, 2024

## LIFE-CHANGING FAITH

Luke 5:1-11

When I was taking a preaching class, one of the guest speakers suggested a good sermon can be characterized in four words: “Hey, you...look do.” That’s what came to mind when I read through this week’s text. It’s the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry and He was already impacting the people around Him. In his call to Simon Peter, Jesus illustrated the simple message of the gospel, and the simple method by which it would be spread. Four key themes emerge.

**Public ministry (vv. 1-3).** Most of us (especially in the Bible-belt South) first hear the gospel in a church service. This kind of open proclamation is what I mean by “public ministry.” By its very nature, public ministry tends to be generalized, with enough mixed and varied content to appeal to the interests of the people in the crowd. In these early days of His ministry along the shores of the Sea of Galilee (called “Lake Gennesaret” in this passage), Jesus was immensely popular. His arrival had been heralded by John the Baptist, and the common people especially were drawn to Him. Notice His message: they came to hear Him proclaim the word of God (v. 1). Notice His method: the crowd by the shore had “pressed;” that is, cornered Him against the water. One of the two small fishing boats moored close by gave Him a mobile pulpit, that when pushed out a bit, provided both some space to breathe and some height from which to be heard. From there, He sat and taught them (see also Matt. 5:1-2). For reflection: This is the “Hey!” part of Jesus’ message. In what ways did Jesus get the peoples’ attention?

**Private ministry (vv. 4-7).** Verse 3 tells us that one of the boats belonged to Simon Peter. Peter had very likely already encountered Jesus and the comradery he and his brother Andrew shared with James and John suggest the other boat belonged to them (see v. 10). With his public message done, Jesus now turned His attention to private ministry. While there were certainly others in or around the boat, the Lord spoke to Peter. His instruction to push away from the bank and lower the nets was met with an understandable mixture of frustration and reluctance (v. 5). The night had been spent fishing; the nets had already been washed and put away, and their efforts had been fruitless. Nevertheless, their respect for the “Master” was enough to make Peter and the others give in. Within apparently a very short time, their nets were tearing, and their boats were floundering because of the haul. For reflection: This is the “You” part of Jesus’ message. How did the Lord transition His message from the many (the crowd) to the few (Peter and his partners)?

**Personal ministry (vv. 8-10).** Here, we see Peter’s reaction. Jesus had done more than perform a miracle; He touched Peter’s life at a critical point that impacted him directly and personally. Notice Peter’s wrenching response to the Lord. What had been frustration and reluctance to obey His simple command was turned to sufficient humility (for his unbelief) and shame (for his sinful condition) that it brought him to his knees. For reflection: This is the “Look” part of Jesus’ message. His attention was aimed squarely at Peter, and His miracle demonstrated a powerful message. What do you think is the connection between Peter’s amazement in verse 9 and his response to Christ in verse 8?

**Practiced ministry (vv. 10-11).** This is the “Do” part of Jesus’ message. Peter wasn’t allowed to stay on his knees very long. Jesus accepted His act of contrition, but then followed it with a commission. Remember: it’s never enough to hear a word from God and then simply ignore it. The miraculous catch of fish was designed to do more than fill the boats and impress the fishermen. Jesus used this very pointed and appropriate object lesson to call Peter (and the others as well) to service for Him. This is another instance where (thanks to childhood Sunday School and VBS), I revert to the King James Version (as found in Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17): “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And that’s exactly what they did! For reflection: Research the calling of these first disciples from the other Gospel accounts. Does it appear that they all had encountered Jesus before? What made the difference this time?