

## **“What if Jesus got into your boat?”**

### **Luke 5:1-11**

I listen to a lot of people who really don't like their jobs. The two most common complaints are that it's boring or it doesn't pay enough to cover the bills. Some folks are working two jobs to pay the bills.

I remember when I was in grade school, my father quit farming because it wasn't paying the bills. He went to work for the Columbia Gas Company during the day and went into people's homes selling fire alarms at night. I used the highlights of his sales pitch to write a speech entitled “Fire Safety in the Home” which got me all the way to the state finals in Columbus at the fair in the 4-H public speaking contest. After fire alarms became available in stores, he started hauling gravel at night from a quarry south of here. He would do whatever it took for my mom to be a traditional stay-at-home housewife.

Perhaps this connects with Simon's experience.

Here's a guy whose day job is catching tilapia on the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus comes along with a side hustle proposal that promises to get Simon off the boat and onto land, mixing with people, being part of a movement, a miracle and perhaps, just perhaps, a new political order!

Jesus at this point sounds a lot like many millennials. Think about it. How many millennials about 30 years old do you know who are still sort of finding their way? You can probably name a few and they might be in your own family. Jesus had no doubt dabbled in his dad's shop and learned how to use a lathe and build stuff.

But carpentry bored him. He doesn't want any part of Joseph & Sons — Master Builders. He's not interested in the family business. And it's hard to get him to synagogue. He doesn't seem to have a hobby or passion. He doesn't seem to know what to do with his life.

And for the next three years, his life is spent on the road, wandering around telling little stories, sometimes getting in trouble with the law — at least the religious law — irritating some people while attracting others because of the way he pokes fun at the establishment and his knack for healing the sick.

His bank balance is zero. He relies on the generosity of people.

He was the first millennial.

At least he wasn't living at home with his parents.

Back to Simon. Jesus' proposal intrigues Simon. Simon's heart is out with the people, not on a boat! He can always catch fish; Jesus offers Simon a chance to catch people!

Who knew that what started out as catching fish would turn into a movement such as the world had never known and what today is called Christianity! And Simon was there in the beginning, and our Catholic brothers and sisters think of Simon as their first pope.

His day job was catching fish! He was a fisherman. Then Jesus called him. And his life was never the same.

There's no indication that Peter was looking for something new.

Perhaps we aren't either. We're happy with our day job and the routines we already have.

What we *don't* need right now is Jesus to come to us, approaching us with another idea.

Don't need that. Don't want that.

Especially since whatever Jesus is offering us, it probably doesn't involve income flowing into our pockets. More like, Jesus' offer is going to cost us.

### **What if Jesus got into your boat?**

So Jesus asks Simon to let him into the boat. Simon is going fishing with Jesus. Really?

This can't be good.

Would you want to spend an afternoon fishing with Jesus? Got to watch the language. No lying or cheating. No beer, just wine. Just like Divinity.

*What if Jesus got into your boat?*

What if Jesus was nosing into your business? What changes might take place?

The effect on Peter was that he saw instantly his own sinfulness and unworthiness.

But, of course, this was only after Peter recognized that Jesus was the Son of God. It's quite possible, and even probable, that Jesus is already in our boat, but we really haven't recognized him. He works quietly. He hasn't done any flashy miracles like he did for Peter and friends.

If we looked carefully, though, we might recognize the work of Jesus in opportunities that come to us in the form of interruptions or a colleague who confides in you. It might have been Jesus giving us a chance to lift up someone's spirit with a positive word, or heal a wound with a loving gesture.

When Jesus gets into our boats, we will not only sense our unworthiness, and have opportunities to "catch" some human "fish," but we will begin to understand our lives as miracles of grace! Peter and friends had so much fish, the boats started to sink. They were victims of their own success.

It was at this moment that Jesus was able to get them out of their boat, take them down the road, enrolling them in a three-year training and internship program, which, by the way, they all flunked.

After teaching the crowds from the boat, Jesus says in verse 4: *“Put out into the deep water,”* Deep water.

This can be scary.

Ever thought that Jesus was taking you out to deep water? What does Jesus have in mind? Why are we doing what this small town carpenter is telling us to do? What is it about him that when he says, “Put out into the deep water,” we listen and obey?

Why out to the deep water?

Obviously, because that’s where the fish are.

Their nets which they had just cleaned after catching zero fish all night long, grabbed so much fish, the boats began to sink.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we trusted God enough to put out into deep water — where it’s dark and uncertain — and discover as Peter did, that this is where the fish are? This is where the blessings are!

Actually, the blessings can be in shallow water too.

The point is not the depth of the water, but the depth of our faith.

Then, here’s another idea: *Jesus says, “Let down your nets.”* Which simply means, “Use what you have.”

Jesus didn’t say, “First get yourself a Shakespeare Ugly Stik GX2 rod.”

He said, “Use what you got, and let them down where the fish are. Then you will be successful.”

Too many times we think that to be true followers of Jesus, we need to have special training, special credentials, special tools and a really cool stole to wear on Sunday mornings.

No. These guys are fishermen! They don’t have anything fancy. They are using methods time-tested over centuries.

Jesus encourages us to use the tools we have.

Consecrate these tools to the Lord’s service.

Pastor Roy Almquist, preaching at Washington Memorial Chapel in Valley Forge a few years ago, summarized his view of this text as follows: “On the surface, Luke’s story is about fishing, but I think we know it is really about taking a risk, daring to move out of our comfort zone and to sail into uncharted waters for the sake of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.”

“For many people today Christian community is a hobby or a pastime rather than a passion and a central source of identity. For many the Church has become a club, rather than a life-defining mission. And if we are not careful we can wake up and find that the Church is just another entry in the date-book of life, on equal footing with the bridge club, the golf game and the Rotary Club.”

“Tradition calls this lesson ... the story of the magnificent catch of fish. But in reality it is a call to the Church to move beyond the familiar and find new ways of sharing our faith with people who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

We like to fish in the shallow, familiar areas, gathering people who are very much like ourselves — folks who know the hymns we like to sing, have had similar experiences to ours, and share our love for a time-honored style of worship. But today we are called to be mindful of those at the margins of society, those who are underwater in their lives and often feel like they are drowning.”

When Jesus gets into your boat and offers a new job, accept immediately. Then put out for the deep, that is, take the risk, and then use what you have.

What follows will be an amazing discipleship story. As you continue to follow Jesus, you will go not only out into the deep — an external journey — but you will go deep *internally*, where you will follow Jesus to the cross. You will pick up a cross along the way and learn the lesson of self-denial — a lesson the disciples couldn’t learn.

Living with Jesus in your boat is no longer a one time experience.

It’s your life.

It’s your life in Christ.

May the peace of God . . .

#817 – You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore