**YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE**

September 3, 2017

Luke 5:1-11

Key Verse 5:10b “Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”

Let me give you a little bit of background of this passage. Jesus first met Peter back in the first chapter of John. It was one year before today’s event. Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter, the Rock. Jesus had a great hope for Peter, and Peter followed Jesus. But Peter kept his fishing business. Peter was a part-time follower, a little bit of fishing and a little bit of following Jesus. Now it was time to take Peter to another level. Peter was very reluctant and a difficult guy to deal with. But he was also the recognized leader of the apostles. It was important to call Peter to be a disciple of Jesus because he was the one who had seemingly the greatest influence on the rest. Peter is clearly recognized as the leader. If Peter follow Jesus, James and John would follow along. In today’s passage, Jesus calls Peter to be a fisher of men. Jesus is calling Peter to be a harvest worker for his kingdom. After his resurrection, Jesus would appoint him as a shepherd of God’s flock. We see the progression in the life of Christians: We are called and forgiven. Then we are called to be fishers of men. Then we are called to be shepherds of God’s flock. Pastor Shadrach calls this process: Christian, Disciple, Disciple-maker, Reproducer.

Look at verse 1. “One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God.” With the back drop of the beautiful Lake Galilee, Jesus taught the word of God early in the morning. Of course, Jesus knew that the crowds came to him to get healing of their sicknesses. Jesus knew that they needed the Messiah’s touch of love. But Jesus taught them the word of God as his first priority. Physical healing is good but only the word of God leads them to the kingdom of God. But the people listening to the word of God became so many that the seashore could not hold them all. Jesus was almost being pushed into the water. The situation was desperate. Though the crowds were eager to listen to the word of Jesus, Simon Peter was undaunted and was indifferent to the crowd of people listening to the word of God. He fixed his eyes on his job washing his net for the next fishing trip. While teaching, Jesus fixed his eyes on Simon. Jesus began to pay personal attention to Simon Peter. Look at verse 3. “He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.” Offering his boat as the podium for Jesus’ message, Simon had an opportunity to listen to the word of Jesus sitting next to Jesus. Winning one disciple in doing the work of God is everything to begin a successful discipleship ministry.

Look at verse 4. “When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’” Out of 11 verses of this passage, every verse except verse 1 is related to the calling of the first disciples. Calling the disciples was Jesus’ first priority as he began his Messianic work. Now as soon as Jesus had finished his teaching, immediately he turned his attention to Simon and challenged Simon through his word of life. Jesus asked Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Don’t you think Jesus knew Simon had fished all night and caught nothing? Then why did he instruct Simon to put out into deep water? Jesus challenged him to turn his eyes from his shallow world and turn his eyes on Jesus. Jesus challenged him to come out of his routine normal life to experience the new world of Jesus. Jesus asked him to explore deep new world the Son of God would reveal later. Maybe Simon’s favorite fishing spot was shallow water. Now, Jesus instructed him to put out into deep water. From a practical point of view, Jesus’ instruction did not make any sense. Simon had already washed his net and was ready to go home and eat the delicious breakfast that Mrs. Simon prepared. Simon was an expert fisherman. But Jesus said the ultimate opposite of what Simon intended to do. From a spiritual point of view, this makes a perfect sense. Jesus, the Messiah, knew Simon better than Simon knew himself. Simon would have to come out of his human thinking and obey the Son of God rather than remaining in his small world of unbelief and despair.

Did you have such an experience as Simon’s? I know Jesus interrupted your routine normal life and instructed you to obey his word contrary to your expectations and plans of life. In Genesis 12:1, God commanded Abraham to leave his household and his country and go to the unknown land he would show him later. From a human point of view, this was crazy. But from God’s point of view, this was the only way for Abraham to come out from the idol worship culture and begin a new life based on the word of God’s promise. Abraham came out of the box of his selfish life and obeyed God’s word and became the father of faith. Of course, it was a big adventure for him. But it was the right adventure. In the same way, Jesus was calling Simon out of his small world into the spiritual world to experience the depth of God’s love. Truly, the word of Jesus is beyond our understanding because it is deeper than the ocean and higher than the mountain. Once we experience it, it lifts up our spirits and enriches our souls and changes our lives forever. Our life will never be the same.

Look at verse 5. “Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets’” According to fisherman’s manual, night was the time for fishing, and now it was bright morning. But Simon did not say, “What do you know about fishing, your junior carpenter?” Amazingly, Simon humbled himself and was willing to learn fishing from Jesus. Although he had no formal education, he had a great learning mind. This enabled him to grow up to be the greatest teacher who ever lived in history. Simon honored the word of Jesus more than his human thinking by saying, “Because of you say so.” Likewise the word of Jesus must be honored among us. The word of Jesus must gain power in our ministry. Here we see Simon’s faith in Jesus. Simon trusted Jesus’ word more than his own fishing experience and was ready to obey Jesus’ word.

What was the result when Simon obeyed? Look at verses 6-7. “When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.” When Simon obeyed, the result was an awesome miracle. From verses 1-3 we see no fish but after Simon’s obedience from verses 4-7 we see many fish. What a contrast it was! Without Jesus, there was nothing. With Jesus, there was more than the boats could hold. Wow! This is a secret of a successful and happy life. Without Jesus, we despair and are frustrated. Peter had worked to the point of exhaustion all night long and had come up empty-handed. Have you ever felt that way? After your best efforts, you have come up empty-handed. Not just after one day but after years of trying, you have still come up short, with not much to show for all the effort you have invested. Jesus knows and is issuing the same call to you and me as he did to Simon. When we obey Jesus, God’s blessing will overflow. Jesus, the Son of God, knew where fish were and led Simon to catch a large number of fish. Jesus restored him from his failure. Jesus enabled him to experience a great success. Luke the author described the abundance of blessing by the words such as “their nets began to break and they began to sink.” Before fishing for people, Jesus taught Simon how to catch real fish first. It was not by a skill but by obedience. In the same way Peter will fish for so many men by obeying.

In this miracle, Jesus showed that he was the Creator God who summoned fish to Simon’s net. The real miracle was greater than the catch of fish. Jesus had captured Peter’s heart. Through this miracle Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah. Jesus opened Simon’s spiritual eyes to see who Jesus was through this miraculous catch of fish. Finally, Simon came to know that he was a sinner. Look at verse 8. “When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’” Why did Simon cry out like this? Through the great catch of fish, God opened Simon’s spiritual eyes to see who he was. In the presence of Jesus the Almighty God, Simon was a helpless sinner. So he cried out in his helplessness, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.” This is a normal reaction when a sinner meets the holy God. Isaiah had the same reaction when he saw the Holy God in the temple in Isaiah 6:5, “Woe to me! I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Maybe Isaiah said many words of unbelief while living among unbelieving people. He felt helpless before God Almighty. God forgave his sin and commissioned him to go and tell the message of God.

It was the same with Simon. In the past, he thought he was a good guy compared to that guy. But when he met Jesus, he realized that he was a sinful man. Simon was a spiritually sinful man. He lived a selfish life. His life direction was to make money, pay his mortgage, pay boat payment, and buy foods. God created man for mission. (Gen. 1:28) But Simon had no mission. He labored and toiled to solve his bread problem and would die as a sinner. Therefore, he felt like dying, saying, “How long do I have to work in the night sea?” So he cried out, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Salvation begins when we recognize that we are sinners before God. This realization made him a truly humble and great man in history. Peter made three confessions as he grew spiritually-the first one was the confession of sin, the second one was the confession of faith (Luke 9:20), and the third one was the confession of love (John 21:15b). Simon’s first confession of sin was a bold step to come to God and a giant step to become a man of God.

Look at verse 10b. “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” Jesus saw Simon’s fear in his inner man. Outwardly, Simon looked bold as a man of the sea. But inwardly he was fearful when his sin was revealed. Fear is the opposite of faith. As long as we are fearful, we cannot do the work of God. Joshua 1:9 says, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” This is God’s command to General Joshua as he is ready to lead his people to conquer the promised land. Joshua knew very well what awaits them. It was a land of giants. 40 years before he along with 11 others went to explore the land. 10 spies reported, “But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.” (Numbers 13:28) Deuteronomy 3:11 says that the bed of Og king of Bashan was more than 4 meters long and 1.8 meters wide. They had new weapons such as iron chariots. On the other hand, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years without fighting experience. It looked impossible to conquer the promised land. But Joshua and Caleb had faith in God Almighty. They said in Numbers 14:9, “Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.” St. Paul was full of conquering spirit as he planned to preach the gospel in Rome. He said in Romans 15:16, “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” He saw himself as a priest, and he saw the Gentiles as holy offerings to bring them to God’s altar. When you look at Canadian students, who do you see? Do you see them as giants? Or do you see them as offerings to bring to God? If you see the students as giants who will crush you, then no amounts of money, no amounts of strategy will work. I pray that you may overcome the inner fear and see the students as offerings to bring to God. I pray that you may do your priestly duty in this coming academic year.

Jesus drove out fears from Simon and accepted him as he was. Jesus did not go away from Simon but instead gave him a new life direction. In the past, Simon was a fisherman. He caught fish and made fish burger and ate them. Now, he will fish for people and lead them to God. Peter will become a powerful Bible teacher and disciple-maker. He will work as Jesus’ harvest worker in the harvest fields. Later, Simon fish for three thousands men in one fishing trip. (Acts 2:41) What was Peter’s response to Jesus’ calling? Look at verse 11. “So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.” Before meeting Jesus, Peter had a small hope to catch fish in order to eat three meals a day. After meeting Jesus, he had a great hope to fish for people for the kingdom of God. In order to follow Jesus, he left everything including a large number of fish he just caught. In this world, some people follow fun in the world. Some people follow pleasure of the world. Some people follow fame and power. But following Jesus gives us a greater hope. Of course, in order to follow Jesus, we must put our priority in Jesus. It is costly in following Jesus. But it is a great honor to follow Jesus. We learn why Jesus put his priority in calling his disciples. From verses 1-3 we see huge crowds and now in verse 11 we see only four disciples who left everything and followed Jesus. There are many people who come and go but there are few disciples who follow Jesus because it is very costly to follow Jesus.

May God bless you to hear Jesus’ calling “from now on you will fish for people” through this passage. I pray that God may raise up many disciples among the University of Toronto and Ryerson students to make Canada a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.