

# Fifth Sunday after Trinity

St. Luke 5.1-11

July 12, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Work in a fallen world weakens and wounds us. The woman has sorrow in conception, the ground bringing forth thorns and thistles for the man. By the sweat of his brow he scratches for bread – or in Peter’s case, fish.

*“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing.”* You’ve had the same experience: working hard for something, only to come up empty. You know what follows: you’re worn down, ready to quit.

Jesus often gives weird instructions, bizarre commands. There’s no earthly reason for it to work. Thus it was when Jesus tells Peter to let down the nets in the deep water. That’s not the way it’s done. Peter relents. He does what Jesus says. That is an important part of being a Christian. We follow the Word of Jesus even when the benefit isn’t obvious at the moment. *“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing. Nevertheless, at Your Word I will let down the net.”*

And suddenly, He who separated the seas from the dry land, He who commands the winds and the waves, who created the great sea creatures to play in the ocean – that One commands school upon school to swim into Peter’s nets. Now Peter’s despair turns to terror: he has too many fish. When we get what we want, it can destroy us. The boats begin to sink. Yet this is not Peter’s real problem.

Peter now sees himself for who he really is. **He is unworthy.**

That’s the story of mankind, even among the great figures in Scripture. The Bible doesn’t gloss over the failures and problems of the apostles or prophets. It shows us the unvarnished truth. Noah’s drunkenness. Jacob’s deception. David’s adultery. Peter’s denial. Paul’s attacks on the first Christians. Every one of the greatest heroes of the faith had this in common: they were unworthy.

**A Christian is unworthy.** We do not become Christians by good morality, learning all the right answers, or having spiritual experiences. The Church is made up of sinners, of unworthy people. You are here this day because you are unworthy. You need forgiveness, you need help, you need to be cleansed and healed, to become new and different.

Peter is right in seeing himself as unworthy. But he is wrong in thinking that God won't want anything to do with an unworthy man. Precisely for unworthy men God became man. In the hour of darkness and despair, in the time when you've messed up and everything is falling to pieces, in the time when you've sinned yet again and think, "I'm no Christian; surely God is done with me now" – in those moments remember what Jesus said to Peter: *"Do not be afraid!"*

At that moment of his greatest realization of unworthiness, Peter was called. *"Follow Me."* Those same words ring out to you this day: *"Follow Me,"* Jesus says to you.

Peter, James, and John were called after working overtime at their fishing business. Matthew was called while working in the tax office. You were called when you first heard the Word, when you were Baptized, when someone told you about Jesus. But the call to be a disciple of Jesus is not just something that happens once. It keeps on happening each day. The great Lutheran bishop Bo Giertz put it this way:

However God calls us, He calls us for this: to be with Jesus and learn from Him, to live with Jesus and receive what only He can give. We might not be able to receive everything right from the beginning. That's why we usually say that a disciple is someone who listens to God's Word and prays to come to the faith or remain in the faith. The main thing is to stay with Jesus and follow Him. He takes care of the rest. You might not understand and comprehend everything at once. You may not even understand the most important things. Peter could hardly have understood what Jesus meant when He said He would be a fisher of men. But Peter trusted in Jesus and followed Him. That's what a disciple does.

*“So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed [Jesus].”* They abandoned their jobs, their homes, and even families to follow Jesus.

By following Him they came under His influence. They learned from Him. That’s how it is to be for us disciples of Jesus too: people who live under the influence of Jesus’ words, and consciously want to do so more and more.

In the ascension of Jesus we learn that He fills all things. So we don’t have to go to a distant country to find Him or become His disciple. But that does not mean we should not follow Jesus as earnestly as Peter, James, and John. We earnestly seek Jesus in His Church, by listening to His Words and staying in Communion with Him. Being His disciple, following Jesus, means that life cannot be the same. What areas of your life need to come under the influence of Jesus’ Words? What areas of your life show that you are being influenced by the devil, the world, or your sinful flesh?

Pray to the LORD JESUS the words of today’s Psalm: *“Teach me Your way, O LORD.”* Where you struggle with a besetting sin, remember that the LORD accepted unworthy sinners, and cry out, *“Heal my soul [O Lord], for I have sinned against you.”* Do not fear. You are His disciple, and again today He gives you His forgiveness. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the Day of the Lord JESUS Christ. He who promises it is faithful, and He will do it.

In the Name of Jesus.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

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