

Luke 5:1-11

Sermon: **The Heart of this event**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Last time I spoke about the meaning of Jesus healing people. He did this primarily to prove to his people that he was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Jesus healed in order to draw the crowds, and then he spoke to them the truth he had heard from God the Father. I also spoke about prayer and its significance. The model of Jesus' prayer is of immense importance for anyone who calls themselves a Christian. I suggested that prayer is more a matter of need than of mere discipline. Likewise, I believe what I will say now touches on one of the main reasons for Jesus' coming to earth: "to teach us how to prepare for the coming kingdom of God, and not to give us our best life here and now."

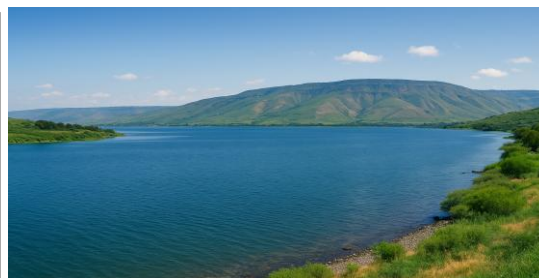
1.1. Ok, let's move on to the next passage from Scripture.

1.2. To begin, let me describe the stage—metaphorically speaking—on which this event takes place. It happens on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. Luke is the only Gospel writer who calls it a "lake," while the others call it a "sea." John, in his Gospel, calls it the Sea of Tiberias¹. But all these names refer to the same body of water—the Sea of Galilee.

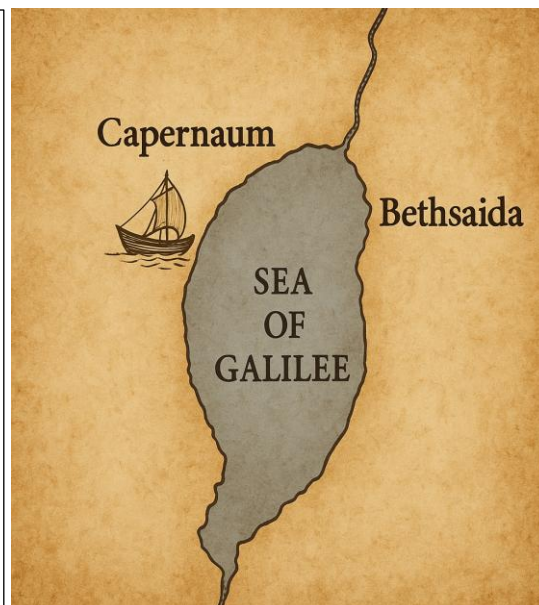
1.3. The name "Sea of Galilee" comes from the province in which it is located, Galilee. The name "Lake of Gennesaret," which Luke uses, is older and comes from the city of Gennesaret, situated south of Capernaum. That city no longer exists today.

¹ John 6,1

The Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on earth—it lies about 215 meters below sea level. Its main source is the Jordan River, which flows through it from north to south. Because it lies below sea level, the climate in that region is almost tropical.



On the northeastern shore of the lake was the town of Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter and his brother Andrew. Just a few kilometers to the west lay Capernaum—the city where the brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee, lived. At that time, Capernaum was the main logistical hub of Galilee. It served as a center of trade for various goods, especially fish. History shows that the fishing industry experienced its first major boom during the Roman Empire, and Capernaum was one of the towns that played a key role in it. Historians note that in the days of Jesus, around 230 fishing boats would set out daily onto the Sea of Galilee, casting their nets for fish.



1.4. From the biblical accounts we see that Capernaum was marked by multiculturalism. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why Jesus chose Capernaum as the center of his ministry. His teaching was not heard only by Jews, but also by other peoples who lived in that city at the time.

1.5. Zebedee, the father of James and John, was very likely a wealthy man. From the biblical record we know he owned several boats and had hired workers. John and James were partners with their father in the fishing business². In John 18:15 we read that John was well acquainted with the high priest. And for someone at that time to be in the circle of the high priest, he had to hold a high social status. The high priests then came from aristocratic families, and their successors were always from the same inner circle. Caiaphas, the high priest in Jesus' time, was the son-in-law of Annas, who had been high priest before him. Because of this, we can reasonably assume that Zebedee was a man of means, and together with him, his sons James and John.

1.6. Peter and Andrew, who came from Bethsaida, joined forces with John and James in the fishing trade and became their business partners. So, they were not fishing simply to feed their families. For them, it was a serious business.

² Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:10

1.7. The event before us in the text takes place on the shore near Gennesaret, which was located below Capernaum. Ok, let's go into the passage.

THE WORD OF GOD

2. (Luke 5:1–3) "As the crowd pressed in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, he asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat."

2.1. We read that the people pressed in on Jesus. In context, the real meaning of that word would be: "they crowded around him so they could hear better." This was not a small group gathered on the shore. This scene, as with earlier ones, shows us that Jesus had become a very well-known figure in Galilee. The fact that people were crowding around him reveals their deep desire to hear him and see him. I think Luke deliberately uses the word "pressed in" to emphasize how eagerly the people wanted to be near this man called Jesus.

2.2. "He saw two boats by the shore, the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets." We read that Jesus noticed the two boats. Because of the size of the crowd, he decided to step into one of them so that people could hear him more clearly while he taught. We see that Jesus didn't only teach in synagogues—he taught wherever the opportunity arose. I believe teachers today should follow his example. Church buildings are not the only place where the word of God should be proclaimed. The whole world is the stage where we can teach others God's word. Of course, I'm speaking here to those who consider themselves teachers and believe they have received this gift from God.

2.3. Let's look back at verse 1 again. We read that they pressed in on him "to hear the word of God." What exactly did the evangelists mean by that phrase? Was it a particular passage, or were they referring more broadly to the whole message of Scripture?

2.4. I believe that in their writings, "the word of God" means this: Jesus came, as one man to another, to explain why all of this exists. He came to teach us why this reality was created, what God's ultimate purpose was when he decided to make it. To teach us what God desires to accomplish in his creation, what his promises look like, and what blessings await those who belong to him. To explain the plan God has for his chosen people, Israel, and what role the rest of us—the nations—have in all of it.

2.5. All of that is "the word of God." And when Jesus taught from Scripture (the Torah), his aim was that the people would understand everything I've just described.

FRUITS SPEAK LOUDER THAN TITLES

3. (Luke 5:4–5) "When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered: 'Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets.'"

3.1. We read that Jesus told Simon to go out into deeper water and lower the nets! As I mentioned in the previous sermon—by this point, Peter and Jesus already knew each other well. Jesus wasn't a stranger telling another stranger what to do. Peter and the other future apostles had already been with him for some time. We know that before this moment Jesus had been in Peter's house, where he healed his mother-in-law. That means when Jesus asked Peter to sail out and let down the nets, Peter already respected him. We see this in his answer: here it's not an amateur speaking, but an experienced fisherman. After years on the Sea of Galilee, knowing it inside out, Peter saw no practical reason to try again. Yet, out of respect for his teacher, he obeyed anyway.

3.2. Let me draw out an application for us today. Why should we (especially those young in faith) listen to someone just because they hold a title in the church? Why should we trust someone simply because they've been Christians all their lives? And I say this particularly when those people are strangers to us personally. I don't think we should trust someone simply because they have higher status. Like Peter, we need to give time to see what kind of fruit they bear: what they teach, how they treat others, whether they have generous hearts, whether they show patience and mercy. If their fruits are righteous, then they earn our respect. In other words, they don't deserve respect because of titles or seniority, but because their righteous deeds show that they truly love God with all their heart. Peter, I believe, saw all of this in Jesus—and that's why he gave him his respect.

THE HEART OF THIS EVENT

4. (Luke 5:6–8) *"When they had done this, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled to 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 Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said: 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"*

4.1. Peter's words to Jesus are the core—the very heart—of this whole passage. Every one of us who calls ourselves a Christian must come to that same realization at some point in our walk of faith. The essence of the Gospel lies in Peter's confession: *"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinner."* What exactly did Peter recognize in that moment? Why did he respond to this miracle in such a dramatic way?

4.2. I believe the miracle itself was only the trigger—something that released all the thoughts and feelings already building up in Peter's heart and mind. Peter wasn't a tax collector, a thief, a murderer, a slanderer, or an adulterer. From what we know in Scripture, he was passionate and hot-tempered, yes—but not outwardly a great sinner like those we might list off. He was an honest fisherman providing for his family, practicing his religion, serving his community. Compared to others, he was a good man. Yet, he was not a Pharisee either—the ones everyone assumed were surely closest to God.

4.3. Like many of us, Peter probably thought of himself as "a good man." By human standards, he was. And we all know people today like that—good citizens, good neighbors. But something in Peter's self-image began to shift. Listening to Jesus' teaching, watching his fruit, something inside Peter's conscience started to stir. He saw a man who loved people no matter who they were—tax collectors, Pharisees, the sick, the outcasts. He saw Jesus' patience, his zeal, his compassion for the Father. He saw a man tirelessly healing the sick, even at the cost of his own hunger, rest, and strength.

4.4. Peter also realized how radically Jesus' teaching clashed with oral traditions. He saw Jesus' relentless passion to rescue his people. He saw that never once did Jesus use his divine authority for his own needs—only for others. He saw that Jesus' intention, as Messiah and King, was to serve—not to be served.

4.5. By the title "Messiah," Jesus had every right to demand service from others. Yet he never did. And that shook Peter to the core. In that moment, he knew he was standing before a truly holy man.

4.6. As their nets overflowed with fish, in the shock and wonder of it all, Peter's self-image broke apart. For the first time in his life, he realized his self-deception: "I am a good man" was a lie. He suddenly saw the truth—before this holy one, he was a sinful, broken man unworthy of his presence. That's why Peter fell to his knees and said: *"Go away from me."* He was ashamed. He couldn't bear the thought that someone like Jesus should have anything to do with someone like him.

—It takes incredible courage and humility to admit to ourselves what Peter admitted that day.—

4.7. As I said, every one of us who longs to inherit the kingdom of God must come to the same realization Peter did here. If we are honest with ourselves, we have failed in what we were meant to be—morally good beings, created in God's image. Instead, far too often we reflect our own distorted image.

4.8. And here's the application for us today: as we grow in our Christian lives—adopting more of Jesus' life into ours, loving his commands, imitating his deeds, carrying his teaching in our hearts and minds—the people around us, who don't yet know him, should see that we are different. They should sense Christ's heart shining in us. Those whose hearts are being made new will feel the shame of their own sin, just as Peter did. They may weep over what they are—and in that moment of "miracle" within, they'll want to be with us more, they'll want to hear about our Savior. But others, whose hearts remain closed, will mock us. They'll call us foolish, brainwashed, outdated. They'll try to manipulate us back into the life they live. Our calling is to resist them—and, out of love for Christ, to keep bearing his image. It is a staggering privilege, but also a weighty responsibility.

THIS IS FAR GREATER THAN US

5. (Luke 5:9–11) *"For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon: 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."*

5.1. Jesus says to Peter: *"Don't be afraid."* Why those words? I believe he meant: *"Don't be afraid to be in relationship with me just because you don't deserve it. Your sinfulness is no obstacle for me or for my Father."* Here again we see one of the great truths of the Gospel. Jesus is not like people who look down on sinners while elevating themselves. The Father, and likewise his Son, loves sinners. And precisely because Peter felt so unworthy before a holy man—he was ready to be in relationship with Jesus. Christ does not love the "perfect."

5.2. When we choose to follow him, we soon realize this calling is far greater than us. It is too much for us. We cannot match the perfection we see in him—and we must not be ashamed to admit it. He will not abandon us because we fall short. He tells Peter, and he tells us: *“Don’t be afraid to be in relationship with me. Let the world see that I love you. And to prove it—I will give you a role in my Father’s plan. From now on, you will catch people.”*

5.3. What does Jesus mean by “catching people”? He uses language Peter understands. Peter is a fisherman, with years on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus says, in effect: *“The sea is the world where people live. All kinds of fish swim in it. Out of them, my Father chooses to draw some out with his net—to keep for himself. In that plan, you, Peter, will help me. You will cast the net, gathering in the people my Father has chosen.”*

5.4. I cannot imagine what must have raced through Peter’s heart and mind in that moment. One thing is clear: our unworthiness does not disqualify us from God’s love, nor from the great role he gives us in his plan.

—At the same time we feel ashamed, then loved, then exalted.—

5.5. But we must always remember: it is God who exalts us, not we ourselves. That truth keeps us humble in the high calling he gives.

5.6. “So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him.” Luke summarizes here. Did it happen immediately in that very moment? Probably not. In Matthew 4:18–22 we read more detail—it seems some time passed. Surely the apostles first took care of family matters, their boats, preparations for leaving. But when Jesus called them again, they knew the time had come. Then they left everything and went with him.

Luke’s words are a short but powerful conclusion: they left everything and followed him.