Good morning, Moon Valley!

Today we continue a sermon series titled, “So You Can Know For Sure.” It is a study through the Gospel of Luke.

The text we are studying today is ▶ Luke 5:1-11. From this text, we are going to learn how to deal with something we have all experienced: feelings of brokenness and shame.

I’m talking about feelings of brokenness and shame that come from doing or thinking something we come to realize is morally wrong. And as we see the ugliness of it in us, it breaks us.

I am *not* talking about honest mistakes or innocent blunders.

Neither am I talking about illegitimate or toxic shame that is often carried by victims of abuse. For example, rape victims commonly feel broken and ashamed, even though it wasn’t their fault. That’s illegitimate. I’m not talking about that.

Children who grew up in abusive homes can learn to feel broken and ashamed about things that aren’t their fault. That’s illegitimate. I'm not talking about that.

I am talking about legitimately feeling bad about your own moral failure, where you wonder, “What was I thinking?”

You may look back on a train-wreck of a relationship and wonder, “What was I thinking?”

You may look back on a series a poor financial decisions that have led to hard times and wonder, “What was I thinking?”

You may look back on a time when you drifted far from God and wonder, "What was I thinking?"

And if you think you've never had legitimate feelings of brokenness and shame, you may be in another category. It's called denial.

Where do we turn when we feel broken and ashamed?

How do we deal with it?

What do we do?

I want to go to school on a person who experienced brokenness and shame. His name is Simon Peter. His story unfolds in our text.

The story begins with Jesus in ▶ Luke 5:1, where it says,

> ESV Luke 5:1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him [Jesus] to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,

On this "one occasion," Jesus is teaching a crowd of people. It's around March, AD 30, toward the end of Jesus's first year of public ministry. "Gennesaret" (*gehn-NEHS-uh-reht*) actually refers to a populated district along the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee, so sometimes people called the Sea of Galilee the lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus and the crowd are very near the coastal town of Capernaum which was within the district of Gennesaret. The primary industry in Capernaum was fishing.

▶ Verse 2 continues.

> ESV Luke 5:2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

This tells us it's probably morning. Professional fishermen would take their boats out at night, which was the best time to fish the Sea of Galilee. They would return in the morning, bringing their catch to sell. And in the morning, they would wash their nets of the accumulated debris.

▶ Verse 3 continues.

> ESV Luke 5:3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

This is Simon Peter's boat. Peter was a professional fisherman. Here's a ▶ photo of the hull of a fishing boat recovered near the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee in 1986. It is dated from the time of Jesus and is considered typical of the fishing boat Peter likely had. It's big enough to accommodate a small crew of fishermen.

Jesus is using the boat to more easily address the crowd. Everyone could see him clearly and his voice would carry across the water to the audience on shore.

▶ Verse 4 records a pivotal moment.

> ESV Luke 5:4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

There are others in the boat besides Simon Peter. Jesus speaks to him because he is the captain.

To be a successful commercial fisherman required deep local knowledge of fish behavior, lake currents, weather signs, fish migration, and spawning patterns.

To a seasoned fisherman like Simon, Jesus' command would have seemed embarrassingly foolish. Jesus is making a big rookie mistake.

This is the wrong time to fish. They had fished all night and caught nothing. The best time to catch fish was in the evening when the water temperature was cooler and the reduced visibility made fish more likely to swim into nets.

And Jesus even refers to the wrong equipment. The term Jesus uses for "nets" is the term for deep-water nets used specifically for night fishing. But this is the morning.

Simon Peter is an experienced professional fisherman.

Jesus is a carpenter.

All this is probably happening in front of a crowd of people on shore who are very knowledgeable about fishing. After all, the primary industry in Capernaum *is* fishing. Everybody knows fishing.

Except, apparently, Jesus.

Right about now I can imagine Peter thinking to himself: "I am dog tired. We caught nothing. I am already disappointed and embarrassed to return empty-handed this morning to a crowd of people waiting to buy fish I don't have. And now I'm going to be humiliated in front of these people by this ignorant attempt to fish, and then I'll have to wash my nets all over again while all the people snicker. All for nothing."

Peter complies, but not without complaint. ▶ Verse 5 says,

> ESV Luke 5:5 And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

The statement, “we toiled all night and took nothing!” is not intended to provide helpful information. Jesus could see that they had caught nothing. It was obvious.

Simon’s statement is a dig, intended to highlight the stupidity of Jesus’ command.

There are no exclamation points in ancient Koine Greek, the language in which this was originally written. But it is understandable why some English translations would attach one to Peter’s statement. In Greek, an emotional emphasis or exclamatory tone was often conveyed by context or word order. By word order, the emphasis of Peter’s statement falls on the phrase, “all night.” This suggests an edginess. “All night! All. Night. Long. We toiled and took nothing!”

In context, this is a cutting remark.

What happens next is miraculous. ▶ Verses 6 and 7 record,

> ESV Luke 5:6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

> ▶ ESV Luke 5:7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

The catch from a single throw of their nets is so large that the nets begin to break under the weight of the fish. A second boat is summoned for

help. And, as both boats are filled with fish, they begin to sink from the massive catch.

But Peter is more concerned with something else in the moment. ▶ Verse 8 explains,

> ESV Luke 5:8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Clearly, Peter feels broken and ashamed. Falling down is an expression of unworthiness. The term, "sinful" means Peter considers himself to be guilty, ethically wrong, a moral failure.

Why does Peter experience brokenness and shame?

Perhaps the most popular view is that Peter simply recognized that he was in the presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. If you have a study Bible or a commentary on Luke, chances are pretty good that the comments reflect this view. The reasoning is that, when people recognize that they are in the presence of God, they realize their unworthiness and sinfulness and inadequacy.

This seems to be supported by the very next verse, ▶ verse 9, where it says,

> ESV Luke 5:9 For he [Peter] and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,

The first word, "for" is a conjunction introducing an explanation for Peter's brokenness and shame.

The short explanation is that he is “astonished.” The original Greek word is θάμβος (*THAHM-boss*). It describes an emotion in which awe and fear are mingled.[1]

Peter is astonished by the miraculous catch of fish; he realizes Jesus is God; and he experiences brokenness and unworthiness in God’s presence.

Peter is not alone in being astonished. ▶ Verse 10 says,

> ESV Luke 5:10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. . . .

Peter falls to his knees and declares himself sinful because he is astonished by the miracle.

That’s the popular view. And I think it’s true. But I suspect it doesn't tell the whole story.

The popular view has some limitations.

You see, this isn’t the first time Peter has been astonished by Jesus. A very short time before this miraculous catch, Peter had seen Jesus cast out a demon from a man in the synagogue in Capernaum. I won’t show it on the screen, but in Luke 4:36, it says,

> ESV Luke 4:36 . . . they were all amazed . . .

The original Greek word translated “amazed” in Luke 4:36 is the same word translated “astonished” in 5:9, θάμβος (*THAHM-boss*). So, Peter had been amazed before at the power and deity of Christ but was not broken by it.

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According to Luke 4:38-39, immediately after Jesus left the synagogue, he went to Simon Peter's house and miraculously healed his mother-in-law. Surely, Peter was amazed at the power and deity of Christ in that moment but was not broken by it.

Also, this isn't the first time that Peter has believed in Jesus. About a month after Jesus met Peter and first called him to be his disciple, Peter was at a wedding in Cana where Jesus miraculously turned some water into wine. According to John 2:11, the disciples believed in Jesus at that point, and that was nearly a year before the miraculous catch of fish in our text.

So, what is it about the miraculous catch of fish that prompts brokenness and shame in Peter this time?

I think it is because Peter realizes that he pridefully thought he knew better than the Lord how to fish. Peter gets a glimpse of his own foolish arrogance before God—an arrogance that uttered the edgy dig at Jesus for making such a foolish command.

Peter is selectively arrogant. He doesn't think he knows better than the Lord in every area of life, just some areas.

Peter was astonished but not broken when he saw Jesus miraculously cast out the demon from the man in the synagogue because Peter didn't think he knew better than the Lord about demons. Demons aren't his thing.

Peter was astonished but not broken when he saw Jesus miraculously heal his mother-in-law because Peter didn't think he knew better than the Lord about healing. Healing isn't his thing.

But Peter was astonished *and* broken when he saw Jesus miraculously bring the fish because fishing is his thing. And he thought he knew better than the Lord about fishing.

Isn't that a problem we all share with Peter? Sometimes in some areas, we think we know better than the Lord.

And when we think we know better than the Lord, eventually it leads to brokenness. “What was I thinking?”

We can trace it all the way back to Adam and Eve. The Lord forbade the forbidden fruit, but the Serpent convinced them that they knew better. They thought they knew better than God what would be good for them.

The ▶ almost big idea I draw from the text is this: We should know better than to think we know better.

I call it the *almost* big idea because, while it is true, it is not the biggest and best idea from our text. That is yet to come.

Nevertheless, the almost big idea is worth some consideration.

In which areas of life do you have a tendency to think you know better than the Lord?

Maybe it’s relationships.

- “I know about the biblical wisdom of godly friends.”
- “I know about the biblical wisdom of being on the same page spiritually with your partner.”
- “I know about the biblical wisdom of reserving sexual expression and fulfillment for marriage.”
- “But I'm going to override all that because I think I know better than God what’s good for me and what will make me happy right now.”

Maybe it's money.

- "I know about the dangers of debt."
- "I know that it's good to be generous."
- "I know it's good to live within your means."
- "I know that, as a believer, all my money belongs to God, I'm just a manager."
- "But I think I know better than God about what's good for me right now; I'm in a season where these things just don't work for me."

Maybe it's spirituality.

- "I know it's good to go to church and be involved in a church family."
- "I know it's good to serve others."
- "I know it's good to work through conflicts in church."
- "I know it's good to pursue God through the disciplines of prayer and Bible reading and reflection."
- "But I think I know better than God about what's good for me right now; I'm in a season where other needs are more pressing."

When we think we know better than God, eventually we will, in the likeness of Peter, be brought to our knees in brokenness and shame.

Back in ▶ verse 8, Peter tells Jesus,

> ESV Luke 5:8 . . . "Depart from me . . ."

This is a natural response to feeling broken and ashamed. Peter probably wants to run and hide, but he can't, so he asks Jesus to leave. Perhaps he fears the rejection he thinks is coming. Who of us would not be afraid of facing searing condemnation for sinning against God?

There is another form of hiding that I fear has become so prevalent in our culture that it is now the norm. It is the refusal to take responsibility for wrongdoing. Instead of owning our own sin, we look for ways to defend ourselves, to explain it away, to soften it, or to pin it on somebody else.

And sometimes, we go on the offensive in an attempt to counterpunch our way out of responsibility, desperately clinging to the delusion that we are good people who don't do bad things. It is as if we are terrified to come clean and admit our ugliness to ourselves and others lest we be devastated.

Let me tell you, I have been a believer in Jesus Christ and a professional God guy for decades. I still can and sometimes do make awful, hurtful, morally bankrupt choices. And I can and sometimes do try to cover them up with defensiveness and denial. It's why Jesus had to die to pay for my sins—I am that broken.

As a child of God, I am no longer a slave to sin, but I can still choose it. And sadly, sometimes I do, and then try to hide behind a fig leaf.

The cold, hard, unvarnished truth is that Simon Peter thought he knew better than Jesus and, in so many words, told Jesus to his face that he is stupid.

That is cringeworthy. But I am in the exact same boat with Peter when I think I know better than God about anything.

Regarding his sin, Simon Peter could have tried to spin it, minimize it, defend it, or even turn the tables, which is the cultural norm today.

- "Well, I really didn't mean that."
- "Well, I was caught off guard."
- "Well, I was tired from fishing all night."

- “Well, I was just going by what we’ve always experienced in the past.”
- “Well, I was just stating the facts. We did catch nothing. Isn’t that true?”
- “And, come to think of it, Jesus, maybe you shouldn’t have put me in this position in the first place.”

To his credit, Simon Peter did none of these things. He simply fell to his knees and confessed his sinfulness. He felt so broken and ashamed, he considered himself unworthy to be in the Lord’s presence.

Jesus’s response comes in ▶ verse 10.

> ESV Luke 5:10 . . . And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid . . .”

Simon Peter could have expected from Jesus a lot of different “do-nots.”
- “*Do not* be such an idiot.”
- “*Do not* come near me.”
- “*Do not* give me that.”
- “*Do not* ever question me again.”
- “*Do not* think that I’m ever going to forget this.”

But the one “do-not” he never dreamed of was: “Do not be afraid.”
- “*Do not* be afraid to admit your sin; I already know all about it.”
- “*Do not* be afraid to make yourself vulnerable; I’m on your side.”
- “*Do not* be afraid that I’ll reject you or fire you from following me; you’re my child.”
- “*Do not* be afraid to come close to me; that’s what I've been waiting for all along.”

And then Jesus does something even more surprising. Not only does Jesus not fire Peter; he promotes him. In the last part of ▶ verse 10, Jesus says to Peter,

ESV Luke 5:10 ". . . from now on you will be catching men."

That's Jesus' way of saying, "I'm going to use you in an even greater way to make disciples." Peter is not only forgiven, he is also accepted as a disciple. He is given the honor of serving Jesus.

And Jesus has graciously paved the way by providing a catch so large that it likely frees Peter financially to serve.

That brings us to the real ▶ big idea of the sermon: When we come to Jesus broken and ashamed, we find that we are forgiven and accepted.

Jesus is so gracious, you may wonder: Doesn't Jesus care about Peter's sin?

Of course he does.

I suspect one of the reasons Jesus orchestrated the miraculous catch was to surface and skim away Peter's pridefulness. Jesus is not ignoring Peter's sin; he's inviting Peter to see it, to be broken by it, to confess it, and to repent of it in preparation for being used in a greater way to make disciples.

Because Peter is broken and ashamed, Jesus graciously lifts him up.

Make no mistake. Jesus can be firm and direct when the moment calls for it. Later on in Jesus' ministry, he discloses to his disciples that he will be killed and raised on the third day. Peter pulls Jesus aside and rebukes him for saying such a thing. This time, instead of orchestrating a miracle to

show Peter his sin, Jesus pulls him up short, saying to Peter, “Get behind me Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matthew 16:23).

Some might call this harsh. But it is no less loving, and no less needful. It is also a gracious invitation for Peter to see his sin, to be broken by it, to confess it, and to repent of it.

When we consider the gracious approach taken by Jesus in our text, we may wonder: Does this encourage believers to sin?

Not according to ▶ verse 11, which says,

> ESV Luke 5:11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

God’s amazing grace draws us to follow him.

Perhaps you have been keeping the Lord and his people at a safe distance because you feel broken and ashamed. “Depart from me. If you only knew what I’ve done. If you only knew what I’m really like. If you only knew what a mess I’ve made of things.”

The truth is we’re all in the same boat with Peter.

- We’ve all thought we knew better than the Lord.
- We’re all broken.
- We all feel shame.

It is also true that we are in the same boat with Jesus who says, “Do not be afraid.” Perhaps the brokenness you feel is the Lord’s invitation and preparation for you.

Remember the ▶ big idea: When we come to Jesus broken and ashamed, we find that we are forgiven and accepted.

In our story, Peter was already a believer in Jesus when he experienced brokenness and shame.

But perhaps you have never before believed in Jesus. By his death and resurrection on the cross in payment for our sins, Jesus offers you the free gift of eternal life. The only condition is that you believe in him for it. This is your invitation to believe right now.

If you have already believed, perhaps the brokenness you feel is preparation to use you in some greater way. Brokenness can be such a powerful ingredient for growth.

In verse 10, Jesus says to Peter, ". . . from now on you will be catching men."

What is your "from now on"? What is it that you sense the Lord wants you to do from now on?

- To trust him with your relationships?
- To trust him with your job situation?
- To trust him with your future?
- To trust him with your money?
- To trust him with involvement in his church?
- To trust him with your spirituality?
- To trust him when he calls you to do something that seems crazy?

Do not be afraid, from now on.

Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, that when we come to you broken and ashamed, confessing our sin, we find that we are forgiven and accepted. Such amazing grace, how sweet the sound! Amen.