

## Sermon for Trinity 5- Luke 5:1-11

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“... ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! ...’” We’ve all been there with St. Peter. We lost our temper again with the children. We made a big and costly mistake at work. We’ve let our friends down. We’ve been disenfranchised in reading the news and seeing media stories. We’ve toiled in sweat and tears, been exhausted, and failed.

For Peter and his crew, another night of fishing has brought in no catch. As he combed the shores through the hours of the dark evening, nothing came of it. No fish. He was tired. Calloused hands brought in the empty nets to the start of another depressing day.

Then comes the word of Jesus, the teacher who had been borrowing his boat in order that He might preach to the crowd. “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” What did this mean for Peter? God desired these two things of Peter: Do your work and hope. Do what’s required of a fisherman and let me see to it that you’re cared for. “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

But this was the last thing Peter wanted to hear. “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” Though finished and done for, Peter trusted the word of Christ. “... At your word...” He let down his nets, his exhaustion, his excuses, his failures, and trusted Christ.

“Put out into the deep...” Was this addressed to fishermen only? What does that mean for us? On one level, all of us have stations in life and vocations to uphold. God says to workers: “Do your job faithfully and well, without injury to others, and I’ll see to it that you’re provided for.” God says to fathers and mothers: “Raise your children to the glory and praise of God, and to the help and comfort of neighbors. I’ll see to their safety.” God says to sons and daughters: “Be obedient, faithful, and true. Beware of the wrong crowd, and let Me worry about how to sustain you.”

But we also know that while earthly work is important, it is not the most important activity of our lives. We have a heavenly calling to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We interrupt our earthly work to receive God’s nourishment and care for our soul through His precious Word.

“Put out into the deep...” On another level, there is also a spiritual side to what our Lord’s bidding means for us: Confess your sins and your failures. Let’s not hide from ourselves the truth that we are in spiritual debt and have nothing with which to pay. God knows us! Let’s not hide the truth from ourselves. Let’s not postpone our confession of sins for a more convenient time. It’s scary to put out into the deep. It’s scary to bare your soul to God and to those whom you’ve wronged. But our sins have wrecked our lives. Way too long have we repaid evil for evil, reviling for reviling, and insults for insults. We have not kept our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking deceit, but slandered and gossiped, damaging reputations. We have smashed and broken our relationships.

Peter saw his great sin and became afraid. What did he do then? “Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” Peter wanted to run away. Run away from what? From his Savior and thus his salvation. He thought: “God is good, but not toward sinners like me.” Perhaps we’ve thought this before. But there’s an underlying hidden supposition here: “I must become good first; I have to be worthy to come to God.” Whenever we think this way, we’re trying to become our own savior. This leads to slavish fear, because we can’t avoid accusations from our conscience. So what makes us worthy to stand before God? How about shame over our sin and trust in Christ as the Forgiver of our sin – what could make us more worthy than that!?

“Put out into the deep.” Today in our culture it’s scarier than ever. Some 10 days ago, the highest legal authority in the US government, the Supreme Court, through a 1 person majority vote, issued their imposition of same-sex marriage upon our entire nation. This coercive law seeks to put radical sexual freedom above the Word of God, and therefore, above Jesus Himself. Supposedly, “Love wins,” but to celebrate sin is to sever the relationship with the Forgiver of Sinners, Jesus Christ.

So what now? We will continue to resist this deceitful law foisted upon us, even as we reach out to those who continue to be harmed by the false god of radical sexual freedom. Yet, we will remember also that every situation we face in ourselves, our family, our parish, our church body, our culture, our country, and our world is kept in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. He is almighty God, and even as things appear to be chaos, they are not. He remains in control, even as much as He was during His passion and crucifixion.

No matter Satan’s bluster, no matter the swagger of our enemies, no matter our bitter sorrows and scars, no matter our fierce battles yet to come and their anxieties, nothing can stand up to the Word of God, even when it sounds forth as only a barely audible whisper as it did for the prophet Elijah in the cave in the Old Testament reading. At his time, it seemed that everyone worshipped the false god Baal. But God preserved Elijah and a remnant from the devastating effects of idol worship. And if we suffer persecution for the Lord’s sake, we know that it is He, by the means of His Word, that has the power to save us – even if His will is not to save from what ails us at this moment, we nevertheless will not bow down to our culture’s false gods. Whether we live or die, whether we prosper or suffer, we live and die in the Lord.

“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Let go of your sins, your lies, your excuses, your toils, your exhaustion, your worries, and your failures. Trust the word of Christ. Jesus, in His Word, will provide. Where there is no fish, now there is 2 boatloads full. Where there is sin, now forgiveness overflows. Where there is brokenness, now He makes whole. Where there is loneliness, now He sets the solitary in families. Where our nation is bent on destroying the moral fabric of her people and worshipping the idols of this age, our true citizenship belongs with the Prince of Peace in a Kingdom which has no end. Do not be afraid – the Lord has won His salvation for you! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠