

Sermon for Trinity 5- Luke 5:1-11

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

“[Peter, James, and John] signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so they began to sink.” Peter thought he knew best what he needed. Another night of disappointment in the fishing industry left him exhausted, despairing, and worried about the future. After all, he had bills to pay, debts to repay, and no fish means no income. If only he could have a few great catches worth enough money to cover his bills and debts and finally live a life of comfort, the way he thinks he deserves.

In the dawn after that disappointing night, Jesus gave the command to the wearied Simon Peter: “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” With a hint of reluctance, Peter answered: “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word, I will let down the nets.” Word had spread quickly of this Jesus who had cast out demons and healed many people of their diseases. “What kind of catch would this be?” Peter began to speculate. Would this be his ticket to wealth?

So the fishermen (with Christ on board) pushed off, back into the still waters of Lake Gennesaret. When they got out to the deep, the waters were anything but still. They were teeming with fish and filling nets to the point of breaking them. They called the other boat to fill it, too. This was it! Peter’s big break! Finally, life would be easy, comfortable, and perhaps even luxurious. It was everything Peter worked for and wanted – and the Lord had given it all to him!

But suddenly, it wasn’t what Peter wanted. The grave reality set in on Peter: at the rate the nets were filling and at the rate the fish were jumping into the boat, they would be sunk in the deep in a matter of minutes. Peter would be drowning in wealth, literally! The Lord had given him just what he wanted, even to the point that now the Lord would sink his boat. What kind of God would do this? In desperation Peter cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Peter hadn’t fully realized yet that this Jesus was the God not only could bring death and destruction, but also he raises up the same to eternal life. Peter wouldn’t die there – the Lord had other work for him to do.

Sometimes the Lord sinks our ships. It is the Lord’s doing to drown the idols to which we unite ourselves. The greed, the lust, and the thinking that we know better what we need than God does. The Lord casts these idols down from the throne of our human hearts. It’s painful. With Peter we say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” The presence of the Lord outside of His grace is dangerous. He kills fishermen and sinners of all sorts, for the wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus Our Lord. “Do not be afraid.” This is the Gospel that Peter and you and I need to hear. “Do not be afraid.” In spite of

what's happening right now, in spite of our sinking boats and the world that is falling down around us, in spite of everything going wrong: "Do not be afraid." But the problem is that we see only the hardships around us: the boats, the fish, and us trying to stay alive in deep water. In this world is no salvation. Only in Christ's Word and promise is there salvation. "Do not be afraid." The message that was brought from the angels to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth is brought to Peter in the boat. "Do not be afraid." God is here, shielding you from eternal trouble and harm.

"Do not be afraid," Jesus said to Peter. "You're dead already. You caught the fish you thought you wanted. But you will not keep them. You will not sell them. You are coming with Me. Your life, as you knew it, is over. Now you will catch others. You will put them to death and raise them to life, even as you have been caught. You will be a fisher of men."

Fisherman spear, snag, or hook the fish for their own use. Our Lord, the Fisher of Men, didn't fish with bait or hooks, or spears. He fished with nets. The fish were scooped up alive out of the water. He caught good and bad fish, clean and unclean. Everything in the path of the nets came up. Notice that our Lord didn't stand in the boat and explain to Peter how He could be a better husband, how he could raise his children to be honorable men and women, or how he could find peace and comfort and certainty in this broken world. These things can be useful, but they're not the most important thing. Christ started by sinking the boats. He was removing Satan's veneer. Jesus pulled back the corner of the proverbial curtain and exposed the pretend wizard. Death is the reality of all fallen men. That is why Peter wants Jesus to leave. Jesus is killing Him. And Peter wants to go back to his fantasy of the good life in this world.

But dying to sin is how disciples are made. They are killed and made alive. In the waters of Holy Baptism, they are sunk and raised to new life. All of this because the Lord of Life was pulled under by the weight of the fish He caught. He was pulled under by the weight of the sins of Peter, James, John, you and me. We go free and are unharmed, rescued from those dark waters, never to return there again, but to stay safely in the boat. But Jesus goes down to pay the ransom for our life.

Still the fishing is not done. Christ takes more men, like fish in a net. So also does He prove Himself to be the Giver of Life. Death cannot hold Him. Jesus lives. He rises from the dead, the Victor over hell, death, and the devil. But hell, death, and the rest do not rise. They stay dead, while He and all who are baptized into His Name rise.

So do not be afraid. The Lord has provided for us through the Ministry of Sts. Peter, James, and John and all those who follow in Christ's Office, and thus are we saved. Amen.

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