



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

^{5:1} Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret^a; ² and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets^b. ³ And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and *began* teaching the people from the boat^c. ⁴ When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch^d." ⁵ Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets^e." ⁶ When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to break^f; ⁷ so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when

^a **5:1 while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.** The word "pressing" shows that Jesus had to do something. While He was likely not concerned about drowning, the movement of the crowd prompted Him to do what He did next. The same "press" word is used of the cry of the crowds for Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:23), and the persistent storm that fell on Paul and his shipmates on the way to Rome (Acts 27:20).

Notice again that Jesus prioritized preaching. Those who have carefully studied this text in its cultural context point out that this was likely early in the morning, at the end of Peter's "shift," when Jesus gathered such a crowd.

Lake Gennesaret (also known as Galilee or Tiberias), is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Chinneroth," which means "harps" (note the shape of the lake). The area of the lake is 64 square miles, roughly the size of Madison, Wisconsin.

^b **5:2 He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.** We have some idea about what these boats might have looked like. The "Jesus boat," found near Capernaum in the late 1980's is estimated to date back to the first century. It is over 25 feet long, although others suggest that the kind of boat Peter used would have been fifteen to twenty feet long.

The washing and drying of the linen fishing nets was important after each night of fishing to keep them from rotting.

^c **5:3 He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.** Here it was not at all convenient to listen to Jesus. It rarely is. Jesus even seemed inconsiderate. Didn't he know these guys had been working all night?

^d **5:4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."** At its deepest, Galilee's depth is 150 feet.

^e **5:5 "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets."** As if it were not enough that the Lord asked for a boat ride, He, a landlubber, presumed to know the fishing business. It was not Peter alone who would be inconvenienced. He could not pilot the boat alone and the text shows that others had to become involved in the casting and drawing of nets.

If these were trammel nets (which they most likely were), they were designed to be used at night when the fish could not see them. Trammel nets were used in deeper water by at least two boats. Peter dared not voice the words, "You don't understand. It just doesn't work this way."

^f **5:6 they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break.** This was likely a small fish called *musht*. Trammel nets surrounded the fish, which became ensnared in the mesh and could be drawn into the assisting boats.

The Gospel of Luke
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Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man^a!"⁹ For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish^b which they had taken; ¹⁰and so also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men^c."¹¹ When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him^{d,e}.

^a 5:8 **when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"** You might wonder what the catch of fish had to do with Peter's sinfulness. Peter's reasoning probably went like this: *If He can see the dark depths of Galilee He can also see the dark depths of my soul.*

^b 5:9 **amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish.** The word "seized" adds to the dramatic word "amazement." Peter and his companions were engulfed in amazement.

^c 5:10 **Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.** Jesus' diagnosis of fear in these men helps us see more of the picture here.

It is hard to escape the comparison between the crowds that pressed Jesus to teach from a boat and the "crowd" of fish that pushed the limits of the fishing nets.

^d 5:11 **they left everything and followed Him.** There is no other option when Jesus calls.

^e 5:1-11 How often do you wonder how much more disappointment you can take? You know, for instance, how much money you need on a monthly basis to pay your bills and maintain your current lifestyle. You know how you want the people around you to behave and you know how you want to feel physically.

We fear losing the things we think we need, having to do the things we do not want to do and looking bad in the eyes of men. That is why people worry so much about the economy, the health of their family and the opinions of others. The Lord Jesus teaches us by pushing us to the limits of our endurance and demonstrating how trustworthy He is at those times. He found a way to stay and engage the crowd that pressed Him to the edge of Galilee. The nets of the fishermen began to break and their boats began to sink, but they survived and even prospered.

Should you be amazed that God knows how to get the money you need in order to live? He gives you more than you need, on His timetable and always with a bigger lesson to teach. Even when we are burdened with the immense task of reaching people with the gospel, He sees hearts and draws sinners into His net.

Here is what you learn about Jesus in this story that turns you from living a self-preserving life:

1. He is always teaching lessons. Get used to it. In any difficulty you should ask, "What is He teaching me?"
2. He does not waste commands. Nothing He calls you to do is optional or of little consequence.
3. You can trust Him with the very best things you have. When He appears inconsiderate of your needs He has matters well in control.
4. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows how much you can take. He sees an innumerable quantity of options you cannot see.

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