

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON –5th February 2023 am

NEW SERIES FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL "God's love for the lowest"

Part 8 "On mission with Jesus"

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 5: 1-11, 6: 11-16 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 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. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 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. 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." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."^[a] ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

^{6:12} In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

If you saw a person who was about to walk into life-threatening danger, you would probably do your best to try to warn them, because you don't want them to put their life at risk. That is a natural response when there is a physical threat to another human being. However, every human being is born facing a greater danger.

It is the danger of eternal death.

Humanity's biggest problem is not social deprivation, mental health or even physical illness. Those are symptoms of a much bigger problem:

The problem of sin

Our biggest problem is that we are born in a state of hostility towards God. Our relationship with him has been broken by our rebellion against him. As a result:

- we are separated from the one who enables us to make wise choices: - instead we make choices that go against what God says is best for us
- we are separated from the one who satisfies our deepest longings: - instead we seek satisfaction in the things God created rather than in God himself
- we are separated from the one who gives us life: - instead we live under the sentence of eternal death, where we will be eternally separated from God's goodness and grace, and will be under his wrath forever.

At the moment of death, our eternal destiny is fixed and there is no way out. It is an utterly hopeless situation from which we cannot save ourselves.

Yet God's mission is to rescue his people from this danger. God is the one we have offended, yet he comes to us in the person of his Son, Jesus. Jesus comes to secure perfect righteousness for us and to pay the punishment our sins deserve, which is eternal death, in order that the relationship between God and us can be restored.

- Through Jesus, we are restored to the one who enables us to make wise choices
- Through Jesus, we are restored to the one who satisfies us not just now but for eternity
- Through Jesus, we are restored to the one who gives us life – eternal life

God is on a mission to save his people from danger

Amazingly, he calls those of us who have been saved (caught alive) to partner with him in his mission.

Peter, James and John show us how this happens. (vv1-11 above). They have just landed the biggest catch of their career, and that experience of God's power has led Peter to acknowledge his own sinfulness. Jesus responds: **"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."** (v10). The word **catch** means to catch alive, not to catch and kill as you would with fish. This catching is done as a rescue mission. Peter, James and John are going to be working with Jesus to catch

people alive – to rescue them from eternal death. Their response is to leave everything and follow Jesus (v11).

To follow Jesus means joining Jesus on God’s mission – a mission to catch people alive

We need to see how Jesus’ power and our obedience work together to catch people alive, and we need to understand far more deeply the value of human souls.

1. **The power of Jesus.** The catch of fish was truly a miracle (v6). The fishermen had caught nothing even though they had fished all night (v5). That in itself was a miracle, though not explicitly stated as such. God has power over fish (and over all his creation) as we know from the story of Jonah, and possibly he directed the fish to avoid Peter’s nets overnight because he had a greater purpose for Peter’s life and was about to reveal his own power and call Peter into fellowship with himself.

Peter, James and John had caught nothing and it was only at the command of Jesus and out of their obedience that they then caught fish, so many fish that the boats were overwhelmed and started to sink! Luke wants us to see the miracle:

- They fished all night but caught no fish
- During the day, when it wasn’t the right time to catch fish, they caught more fish than they could handle.

Peter knew something supernatural had taken place (vv8-9 above), and recognised that it could only be attributed to the power of God. He was scared because he knew he was in the presence of God, and thus he felt his guilt and knew himself to be the sinner he was.

This was a miracle of God’s power performed by Jesus.

Yet the fishermen had a part to play.

2. **The obedience of the fisherman.** Peter had to obey Jesus and put down his net into the water for the catch. The fish did not catch themselves! Peter could have thought of excuses to avoid obeying Jesus’ command.
- I’m too tired – **we toiled all night (v5)**. I just want to get cleaned up and go home
 - It’s no use – **and took nothing (v5)** We didn’t catch anything at the best time to fish, so we wouldn’t catch anything now.

Ask yourself how often you respond like that when it comes to the commands of Jesus?

- Jesus, I'm tired and what you're asking me to do is too hard and unpleasant, and I don't have the energy for it.
- Jesus, I've tried that and it doesn't work. It's no use. Isn't there another easier way?

Luke teaches us that

Jesus' way is always better.

Instead of making excuses, Peter responds with obedience - **at your word I will let down the nets (v5)**. It was a response of faith: I'm tired, it didn't work before but if you, Master, command me, then I'll obey your command and trust you with the outcome. As a result, Peter experienced the blessing of coming to know Jesus.

- Is there something Jesus has been telling you to do, and you have not obeyed him? Perhaps the same command keeps coming up in your Bible reading, then it has been reiterated in the preaching on Sundays and again in conversations with friends. Instead of making excuses, follow Peter's example. Trust that Jesus knows best and trust him with the outcome. Then say:

Master, as you command, I will obey you

3. The worth of people. It might appear that Jesus wants to make us wealthy. If we obey him, he will fill our boats with a massive haul of fish! Luke is clear that is not the message that we are to take from this narrative. When Jesus spoke after the miracle, he did not mention the fish, but he did call Peter into his mission

"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (v10).

Jesus came to save people from their sin, not to feed them with fish. Every day, he provides everything we need to live here on earth, but the provision of physical food points to the ultimate work of Christ – catching people up into his kingdom where they experience eternal life.

The salvation of the human soul is worth more than the wealth from the catch of fish. The response of Peter, James and John shows this (v11). They left everything:

- They left their fishing business, their boats, nets and every other asset they owned
- James and John left their father
- They left the huge catch of fish

They walked away from the wealth he had given them to follow Jesus into mission. All this points to the value of souls being saved. Catching men alive for the kingdom of God is more valuable than a successful fishing business and a huge catch of fish. Our culture would dispute this, however.

- Do you understand the value of human souls and their salvation?

Perhaps you are you still counting up the value of fish or the equivalent?

- Your children getting good grades at school and going on to university
- Living in a nice house
- Getting a promotion
- Investing in your pension

None of those things are sinful in themselves but we need to ask ourselves:

- Do we value the material, physical things more than we value the salvation of souls?
- Are we more concerned about our children getting a good job than about them getting into the kingdom?

To leave everything and follow Jesus will mean being set on Jesus' mission:

A mission to catch people alive

What does all this mean for us?

a) Success does not depend on us. Jesus wants us to see that the work of seeing people saved depends on him. The catch of fish did not happen because of Peter – Jesus brought the fish into his net. The same is true when it comes to catching men alive for God. The Bible is clear that salvation is a work of God from start to finish:

- It is God who chooses a people
- It is God who sends Jesus to secure salvation
- It is God who gives the Spirit who is essential for salvation.

We are not called to reason people into the kingdom with clever arguments. The Spirit of God is essential because what is needed is a new birth, not just a profession of faith.

It is God alone who does it – that should be a comfort to us.

b) Success does require us to act. However, we have a part to play, just as Peter had to let down his net.

Jesus does the miracle but we have to act the miracle

The net that we have to cast is the net of the gospel preached. Jesus got into Peter's boat to teach the people the good news of the kingdom of God, the Gospel. **"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose"** (Luke 4:43). All we are called to do is lift up Jesus to a lost and dying world, and Jesus draws them to himself. People need to hear the good news that there is a way to come back into a living relationship with God through Jesus. That is our responsibility.

We go in the power of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God to all people, trusting in Jesus to act

As we do that, Jesus directs the hearts of men to do as he wills.

That is what fishing with Jesus looks like.

- Are you going to get on board with his mission to catch people alive for the kingdom of God?

That does not mean we all have to be preachers or that everyone has to go into fulltime mission somewhere. The priority is to cast the net of preaching the gospel but that requires everyone of us to do our part. Our part might be:

- Prayer
- Giving financially
- Sitting down with friends over coffee and answering their questions, or offering to find out the answers
- Bringing others to hear the gospel being preached
- Living out the gospel – probably the biggest challenge. Ask yourself whether your character displays the worth and beauty of Christ, or are you always complaining and grumbling?

All this requires the whole church to work together for the same goal – the goal of catching people alive for the sake of the kingdom of God and their eternal life.

We will only do that if we really see the value of a human soul – any human soul, not just the souls of those we love.

We are good at warning people about walking into dangers in this life but we are not good about giving warnings about the danger of eternal death. We can see dangers in

this life with our physical eyes, but this is not the case with the very real and ultimate danger of eternal death.

We may see the effects of people being separated from God by sin and then seek to treat those effects by giving

money for social deprivation, offering counselling for mental health issues or medication for physical illnesses.

However, we don't see spiritual separation from God in the same way we see physical danger. Because of that, we are slow to play our part in the mission of Jesus to catch people alive.

It might be that you need to ask God to give you a vision of what it means to be eternally separated from God, and to give you a real sense of the value of the human soul. We may pray earnestly for members of our family who are not saved, but not pray in the same way for neighbours whose souls are equally at risk and who are equally valuable to God.

Unless we truly grasp what it means to be eternally lost, we will not be moved to pray for others too. As we pray that God will give us more of a sense of the value of every human soul, we will be less easily distracted by the pleasures of this world (though God has given us those to enjoy) and we will perhaps be more willing to play our part in letting down our nets for a catch.

We will be more willing to follow Jesus into his mission to catch people alive for the kingdom of God.