

Sunday School Lesson 01.10.21

Good morning, I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for January 10, 2021, "Called To Significance"

Background Scripture Luke 5:1-11

"Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up to the shore, left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:10-11)

The Lake of Gennesaret is also known as the Sea of Galilee. It is called Gennesaret because the fertile Plain of Gennesaret lies on the northwest side of the lake (Matthew 14:34). The Old Testament calls it the Sea of Chinnereth because of the shape of it (Hebrew "harpshaped," Numbers 34:11) and "Chinneroth" (Joshua 12:3) from the town so named on its shore. The Sea of Tiberias is another designation (John 6:1; 21:1), associated with the capital of Herod Antipas. All of the names of this single body of water were derived from places on the western shore. The lake is located some 60 miles north of Jerusalem. The Sea of Galilee was the focus of Galilee's wealth. Nine cities with a population of 15,000 or more stood on its shores. To the northwest was Capernaum, the home of Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:29) and where Matthew sat at the tax collector booth. (Matthew 9:9). It was also the scene of much of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

Previously in Luke, the Lord Jesus was in Capernaum (Luke 4:31) healing many people who came to Him after the Sabbath (Luke 4:40-41). After these many mighty works, Jesus slipped away to pray in a deserted place near the city. His disciples found Him and reported how many people wanted Jesus to stay there among them. But Jesus told them that He had to go to the other cities and preach the kingdom of God, for that is what He was sent to do (Luke 4:43). His mission was not to call others from a single place but to go to people throughout Judea, where they worked, where they lived, where they studied, and call them as they were, where they were. Jesus left Capernaum to preach in other cities of the Decapolis (Matthew 4:25). His first stop was Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee) where He makes contact with a crowd of people and with some of the men whom He would call to be His Disciples.

In Luke 5:1-11 we see the Lord Jesus helping some fishermen get their lives aimed in the right direction. Scholars are divided over whether this incident

is identical with Jesus' call of these fishermen as recorded in Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20. We know that John 1:35-42 records the first meeting between Jesus and Peter. The incident in our text takes place about one year later. James and John, and perhaps some others, such as Peter's brother, Andrew (unnamed), were present, but the focus in our text is on Jesus and Peter. These men had all met Jesus and had begun to follow Him, but they were not yet completely committed to His mission. This incident redirected their lives.

In the opening verses (1-3), Jesus is teaching God's Word, but Peter is working at his fishing business. By verse 11, Peter has left his business to follow Jesus in catching men, not fish. Jesus' words in verse 10 are the key for understanding and applying this story: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." In their vocation, the fish they caught would die, in their new focus, dead men would be caught and come alive for Jesus. The story shows us how Jesus transforms everyday people (even sinful people, like Peter) into His servants, involved in His great cause of catching people for God. It teaches us that the greatest purpose we can have in life is to follow Jesus in catching men for Him.

In verses Luke 4:1-3, Jesus is preaching the word of God to the crowd, and as Luke 4:43 makes clear, His message focused on the kingdom of God, the realm where God is sovereign and people are subject to Him. The fact that His message is called "the word of God" means that it comes from God as its source. The word Jesus preached originated with God and therefore had God's authority. As Jesus said, "I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me." (John 8:28).

When we talk to people about the gospel, we simply have to tell them what God has revealed about Himself, about the Savior, and about our need for Him. Witnesses don't make up their own stories. Witnesses are under oath to tell the truth about what they have seen and heard. The Bible is God's Word to us through His faithful witnesses. Our job, like that of the apostles, is to tell what God has done through His Son Jesus.

The Lord directed Peter, the fisherman, as to where he ought to cast his nets. Jesus was giving the orders and when Peter obeyed, he got the miraculous results. If we aren't sure what to do to reach out to lost people, we need to pray, "Lord, show us where the fish are that You want us to catch, and we will cast the nets there."

On this occasion, Peter got almost more fish than he could handle, the nets began to break and the boats began to sink. If Peter had not obeyed by putting out into the deep and letting down the nets in obedience to the Lord, this miracle would not have happened. The Lord could have made all the fish swim to shore and jump into Peter's boat, but He didn't do that. Peter had to obey and then the Lord did this miracle.

Like Peter, we need to set aside our reasons why things won't work and obey the Lord in seeking to bring people into His gospel net. Just let down the net of the gospel in obedience, and let the Lord bring the fish into it. To catch men for Christ, we must learn to obey the Lord's sovereign authority, when He tells us to bear witness of His good news.

In Luke 5:11 it says; "So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed him." These men are so convinced that Jesus will meet all their needs from here on out that they were willing to entrust themselves to His providential care. Jesus states that whoever wants to follow Him must forsake himself.

In Jesus, James, John, and Simon have found a more fulfilling life than fishing. Even before this encounter, they knew of Jesus as a teacher and healer. After establishing this groundwork, Jesus calls them to His service. The immediacy of their reaction is expected in their society, given the Jewish religious education system.

All Jewish boys went to school to learn the Torah. If a student showed promise, he was invited to keep studying the Prophets, but if not, he went to learn the family trade. If a student showed promise in studying the Prophets, he was invited to the honor of further study of the poetic Writings of the Hebrew Bible. If the boy did not seem bright enough to keep studying, he would be sent back home to learn the family trade. If a student showed promise after learning the Torah, Prophets, and Writings, a rabbi would tell him simply, "Follow me." The student would never turn down the great honor of studying under a rabbi.

Simon and his companions were going about their family trade the day, Jesus performed this miracle. This means at some point in their education, they were told they were not gifted enough to continue. No rabbi would want them. What a blessing that this rabbi, Jesus, came to them and invited them to be His students. Jesus does not care what the world says about a person, or how the world has evaluated them. He knows our hearts and calls those who will to just follow Him.

From the text section, Stepping into the World, Jesus called fishermen, Simon, James, and John, to follow him and become proclaimers of the Good News. God calls us to do the same, and our calling works itself out in specific places and with specific people.

I read a story about an elderly man who ran a variety store. It had once been a thriving business, but as he got older, the man became obsessed with keeping the store neat and clean. He spent hours arranging and rearranging the merchandise on the shelves. Some days he wouldn't even open the store, for fear that it would be thrown into disarray. That man had lost sight of the purpose of his store. This sounds ridiculous, but for him it was easy to do. Many times our focus shifts from the Lord's purpose of catching people in the gospel net, to our business, whatever it may be. Maybe, we can use this lesson to show us all that the greatest purpose we can have in life is to follow Jesus in catching men alive for Him.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson January 17, 2021, "Called To Heal"

Background Scripture Mark 2:1-12.

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Lesson and Commentary, Sunday School Lesson from Dr. Craig Rikard, a South Georgia Pastor, Sermon from John Piper, Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and The Present Word.