

## In Nomine Iesu

### The Fifth Sunday after Trinity 2021 Called to be Disciples - Luke 5:1-11

So it was, as the multitudes pressed about Jesus to hear the Word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So 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. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has called us into His kingdom of grace. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

This was not the first time Jesus and Peter had met. No, they had met for the first time when Peter's brother Andrew introduced them. Peter had also witnessed Jesus heal his mother-in-law. So it was no stranger who got into Peter's boat and asked him to put out a little from shore. If not a friend by now, Jesus was at least a trusted acquaintance. So, Peter was willing to do Him the favor of allowing the use of his boat for a while.

#### I

But Jesus had more in mind than speaking to the crowd when He asked for Peter's boat. He wished to communicate with Peter as well. Because He intended to call Peter away from his vocation of fisherman to his new vocation of disciple and, ultimately, apostle and preacher. The great catch of fish was a sign to Peter that Jesus was not just another teacher, but the Messiah, the promised One. The call to leave his nets and follow Jesus was not just a job proposition from a man, but a call from God Himself. The purpose of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Bible is always to proclaim Him the Messiah, the Son of God in human flesh come to redeem the world from sin and death.

The glory of this particular miracle is often attached to Peter instead of to the One who called him. It is not unusual for this text to be seen as Peter's promotion. The thinking goes like this: Previous to it Peter was engaged in the mundane job of fishing, but then Jesus came, saw something special in him, lifted him up out of that worldly occupation and gave him a better, more glorious, more spiritual vocation.

It surely is a glorious thing to be called into the ministry of Christ's Church, the ministry of word and sacrament. As Lutherans we recognize that when God's people call a pastor to serve them, the voice may be that of people, but the authority behind their voice is the voice of God. Christians hold their pastors in high regard because they know that insofar as their pastors are faithful to God's Word, they speak with the voice and authority of God Himself. As Jesus Himself said, "He who hears you hears Me." (Luke 10:16) Such would be the case with Peter at Pentecost, at the home of Cornelius, and throughout the

years of his apostleship. There is a reason we speak of Peter's call into the ministry, and that of all preachers who have come after him, as a divine call, a divine vocation.

At the same time the Bible does not divide God-pleasing vocations into those that are worldly and unspiritual and those that are spiritual and somehow of greater value. The only unspiritual occupations the Bible identifies are those that defy the commandments, such as thief, prostitute, murderer or false prophet. For the Christian all occupations are spiritual. All callings are divine. They are vocations to which God has called us so that we might be instruments in His hands to bless others. The truth is that Peter was not being elevated, only transferred. He was not being called to serve God that day as if somehow he hadn't been serving God and his neighbors before. Rather Jesus now calls him to serve and follow in a new way, a way different than being a fisher of fish. Now he will be a fisher of men. He will gather people with the net of the Gospel.

## II

Our spirituality is not grounded in our occupation. But that is a difficult concept for us. We tend to define ourselves by our work. And we see some occupations as being more worthwhile than others. When we meet someone, one of the questions we first ask is, "What do you do?" And, let's admit it, we are more impressed to hear that someone is a doctor or banker than a secretary or a factory worker.

We tend to think that spirituality can be measured by activity. To be a pastor is to do spiritual work, to spend all our time doing spiritual things. The Christian accountant or truck driver, store clerk or carpenter, might be deceived into thinking that there is no spirituality in their activities unless they create a "ministry" of their own, such as giving discounts to other Christians or handing out tracts at work or putting a fish symbol on their business signage, as if that will make what they do more God-pleasing.

But, dear friends, before God we are not defined by our actions, but by our faith. What we do is not more important than who we are. Our status before God is hidden in Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, "[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) In Jesus alone we are found to be the "righteousness of God." Our occupations may be ordinary, mundane, and even boring. We may be frustrated when our work seems to accomplish little or is unappreciated. And so we do not always do our jobs as well as we could. And the result is that we become poor reflections of the love of God that He would have shine through us onto others, so that His name be glorified through our works.

Even so, God still declares us righteous in His sight, calling us His children and heirs of His kingdom. Why? Because we have been counted righteous for the sake of the work of Jesus. That is why our works, done in faith, are pleasing in God's sight. In Christ our feeble efforts, our dim reflections of His love and mercy, are made to shine as bright as the morning sun, as Jesus Himself will proclaim to everyone on judgment day.

This is not to say that we shouldn't do our best because God accepts whatever we do anyway. No, the Bible teaches that some things are sinful, and to be avoided. It teaches that we are to live according to His commandments and encourage those in our homes and communities to do the same out of love for neighbors. It teaches that we should do for our neighbor as we would have others do to us.

But our status with God, our spirituality, is not to be found in our actions, but in Christ. So that when we sin, the last thing we want to do is echo Peter in saying, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!" We shouldn't think, "Jesus, I'm not good enough

for You. But if you give me a little time I'll clean up, and then we can be together." **No**, we confess every week – every day! – that we have sinned, that we are “heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and ... pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.”

Our holiness consists not in the worthiness of our works, but in our embrace of Jesus, the Savior of sinners. Every time we receive His word, reading it in our homes, hearing it from this pulpit, and receiving it at this altar, that is God speaking to us. God is telling us that we have been freed from the burden of trying to please Him by our works. Dear friends, that means we can give our good works away to those around us, **because we do not need them for ourselves.**

Whether you are a pastor, teacher, soldier, parent, student, professional or laborer, all your earthly labors done in faith, even imperfectly done, are blessed by God and bring him glory. As Martin Luther said, “God bestows all that is good upon us, but ... you must work and lend yourself” to Him as His means, His mask, behind which He blesses others. Even when it seems to us that we have labored all night, or all week, or all our life with little result, that our nets are not full, but empty at the end of our labors God looks upon us who followed Him in faith, and says, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’” Such is the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

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Each of us has been called to follow Jesus as preachers of the word and/or hearers, as husbands or wives, as parents, children, employers, employees, citizens of our nation and citizens of the kingdom of God. Some receive the call to serve in the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. But all have been called by the Holy Spirit to believe the message God speaks through that office that all sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ, and that we all have the privilege to serve God and neighbor according to our vocation, to be His instruments of blessing to others. By the grace of God, all of us are counted among the disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**