

Potomac Hills Community Church

Rev. David V. Silvernail, Jr.

February 25, 2001

Revealed Power

“Revealed Grace” - a series from Luke Luke 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION: *Just Another Day Out Fishing*

Select two participants – big, strong guys who love to fish.

Give them the fishing net and spread them out on the stage.

(right side away from the music equipment)

Select four children to serve as the fish.

(who are not wearing good clothes or dresses)

Place them on the floor just below the stage.

Have the “fishermen” cast their net over the “fish” (the children) and pull them up onto the stage.

Ask the children what it felt like being the fish.

Ask the “fishermen” how easy or hard it was to fish this way.

The creative teacher that Christ was, He used some of the common experiences of life to teach some very important lessons.

He knew that His greatest ministry would not be with the crowds but with individuals ignited with fire.

In Luke’s gospel we continue to discover how He kept chiseling into people’s lives to make them His followers.

We come upon Him on one of those common days filled with common events. He goes down to the Sea of Galilee, to where the fishermen were working, and in the midst of all these hardworking people, He sits down to teach.

We pick up the story with the people ...

v. 1-3: Listening to a Carpenter¹

*“One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, **great crowds pressed in on Him to listen to the word of God.** [2] He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. [3] Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So He sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.”*

¹ Parts of the exposition of the text have been adapted from Preaching the Word, Luke: Vol. 1 by R. Kent Hughes, pages 159-164 and Everybody Can Know by Francis and Edith Schaeffer, pages 86-93.

Here we have Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, and his partners, James and John recovering from a night spent fishing with dragnets. It was backbreaking work because it involved laying out a great net in a semicircle, encompassing over 100 feet, drawing it in hand-over-hand, then repeating the procedure again and again. It was hard work that only the strong could perform.

The group of fishermen had sweat through the night without as much as a single fish to show for it. So at dawn, they beached their boats, ate breakfast, and under the warming sun engaged in the tedious, but necessary, process of washing and mending their nets. You ever see anyone wash nets? They stand in the water about up to their knees and slush the nets up and down to get the seaweed and shells and anything messy out of them. Then they sew up the holes and arrange the nets for drying, so they won't rot. Once the nets were dry, they would be folded up and put back in the boats for the next night's work.

On this particular day, the monotony was broken by the presence of a large crowd of people pressing around Jesus *"to listen to the word of God."* We know from chapter four that Jesus was preaching "the Good News of the Kingdom of God." Since He was preaching with unusual power and authority, the crowds pressed in closer to get a good look and so they could hear Him better.

And Jesus was running out of room.

So Jesus asked Simon Peter if He could use his boat as a floating pulpit, and so Peter and Jesus and probably Andrew anchored the boat a few yards off shore, and Jesus resumed His teaching, His voice carrying effectively over the water to everyone gathered on the shore.

We don't know how much attention Simon Peter was paying to Jesus' message. Probably after a long night's work he was taking it easy, perhaps even daydreaming, waiting for Jesus to finish so he could put his nets away.

But whatever the case, Jesus soon had Peter's full attention.

And so we come to this scene of the Fishermen ...

v. 4-7: Fishing for a Carpenter ²

*"When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets, and you will catch many fish." [5] "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. **But if You say so, we'll try again.**" [6] And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! [7] A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking."*

2 Parts of this section and the application are adapted from the message, "Lessons Learned On A Fishing Trip" by Rick White, 08/11/96, SF AM9632, SermonSearch.com; Closer Walk daily devotional by Walk Through the Bible ministries, page 73; Saving a Fallen World: Luke Simply Explained, Welwyn Commentary Series by Michael Bentley, pages 68-72.

Even the most dedicated fisherman has a limited supply of patience. If the fish aren't biting, he may as well go home. Peter was already tired from casting and retrieving his nets all night. In spite of his experience, skill, and effort, he had nothing to show for his work.

Now imagine how startled this professional fisherman must have been when the carpenter told him to head out to deeper water and lower his nets. He had just spent a **long** night fishing with only tired muscles and empty nets to show for it.

It's a pretty demanding request, if you think about it.

Jesus was asking a man who had not slept all night, who had spent the night examining empty mesh nets, to beach the boat, load a thousand pounds of wet nets, row out to deep water, and circle around setting the nets – all under the hot midday sun.

Not only was it a bold, demanding request, but there are several things about this particular event that requires closer examination.

First, it was the wrong **person** giving instructions.

Peter had fished these waters from boyhood. There was nothing in the craft with which he was not familiar: The habits of the fish, the hours and spots most suitable for fishing, the climatic conditions, and so on. What right did Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth, have to ask an expert Galilean fisherman, a man who had spent his entire life on the Sea of Galilee, to do His bidding.

Now if you've ever gone fishing with someone who knows what he or she is doing, you'll quickly realize how little you actually know about fishing. I remember going fishing with Ealon Speigner. Ealon was in his mid-80s at the time and he knew how to fish. He knew that 100% of the fish were in 10% of the water and he knew where the percentages lie. He always caught fish ... lots of fish ... lots of big fish. I didn't catch lots of fish ... I caught only a few fish ... and they weren't that big. I'm not a fisherman.

But Ealon, at different times, took David and Daniel out fishing. And they listened to what Ealon, the fisherman, had to teach them. And they caught big fish. When Ealon was 84, he was especially good friends with Daniel, who was four, and one day he and Ealon went out fishing and Daniel came home with a four-pound bass. It was almost as big as he was. And just so you don't think I'm making this up, I've got pictures.

Now, if we reversed the situation, and I was going to take Ealon out to fish and tell him what to do, I'm pretty sure that he just would have smiled a lot and muttered something about preachers under his breath.

And that's sort of like the situation we've got here.

Think about it, a **carpenter** was instructing a **fisherman** about fishing.

It's the wrong person giving instructions.

Second, it was the wrong **time** to fish.

In Galilee the best time to fish was during the night and the very early morning. This explains why they had been out all night. Even though they caught nothing, the possibility for a catch was much better than in the daytime.

Third, it was the wrong **place** to fish.

Every fisherman knew that the best place to catch fish was along the shore, not in the deep water. This would only bring ridicule from those who would hear about it later.

The fishing report was pretty bleak, but the command of Christ was pretty clear: “Let down your nets, and you will catch many fish.”

We can sympathize with Peter’s expressed reluctance . . . and yet we can enjoy his obedience. Peter had seen what Jesus had done in the local synagogue and in his own home healing his mother-in-law. He had seen Jesus working all night long performing a wholesale healing of all the sick in Capernaum.

So now, despite all the odds being against him, Simon Peter agrees to Jesus’ request. But only because it’s Jesus; he says, “***Because You say so, we’ll try again.***”

Now if Peter was still yawning and rubbing his eyes as he dropped the nets over the side, he was soon shocked into being wide-awake. The text says, “*And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.*”

Frantically, Peter starts pull in nets filled with fish. If the nets were that full, the weight of the fish would start pulling the boat, not the other way around. The second boat jumps into the action and they both are filled so much they’re on the verge of sinking. Now these boats, if typical fishing boats of the time, are 27 feet long and about 7 ½ feet wide. We’re talking several tons of fish to fill them up. Imagine the roar of the crowd to see these two boats bring in this incredible haul.

It was a revealing of Jesus’ power; another massive miracle over nature that demonstrated the raw outpouring of power from this Nazarene carpenter.

And so we see that where human skill and wisdom proved inadequate, humble obedience to the Master produced the catch of a lifetime. Simon Peter, the fisher of fish, obeyed Jesus Christ, the fisher of men, and, as they say, the rest is history.

And because he obeyed, we see that he was . . .

v. 8-11: Called by a Carpenter³

“When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m too much of a sinner to be around

3 Parts of this section are adapted from The NIV Application Commentary: Luke by Darrell Bock, pages 154-155, 160-161, 163-165.

You." [9] For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him. [10] His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" [11] And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus."

The text says that Peter, Andrew, James and John were awestruck and amazed. Jesus' power had been revealed to them in a way they would have understood better than anyone else. The miracle of the fish had been given to fishermen. They had been brought personally into the sphere of Jesus' mighty Kingdom power. Peter has seen this before, but now this power has been demonstrated on Peter's turf ... his sea, his boat, his nets ... and so the significance of all this had hit him as never before.

He was acutely aware of two things.

First, Jesus was Lord. He was the Lord of the fish and the fishermen, the Lord over nature and people. And Peter knew it.

Second, Peter knew himself. He was a sinner. Faced with Christ's power and authority, his soul flooded with a sense of his own shallowness, his own hollowness, and the realization of the personal consequences of sin. And to his way of thinking, sinners and the Lord don't usually sit in the same boat.

You know, people who know they are sinners often say and do strange things. Look at Peter. He's now confronted by the miraculous work of Christ, the One who would take away the sins of the world, **and he asks the Lord to go away.**

Why?

Because he was overcome with a sense of his own sinfulness.

It's no different today. The person who says, "I can't go to church because it will only remind me of how bad I am" is revealing more about themselves than he or she might care to admit. That person is burdened with guilt ... but powerless to do anything about it ... when it comes to removing the burden of guilt, they're helpless. Their only salvation is found in running to Christ, but being spiritually blind they ask Him to leave.

Though humble in character, Peter misunderstands how God works with those who understand their failings and turn to Him. He feels that as a sinner he has no chance with God. But Jesus shows him that this sense of being less than God and less than holy is precisely what God can work with. God can use Peter because he knew that he needed God, not the other way around. Peter thought Jesus should leave because He was in the midst of sinners. Jesus taught Peter that sinners are the people that God can use the most. So Peter simply follows Jesus.

And so Jesus calls Peter to enter into the process of gathering people and rescuing them from the dangers of a fallen world. He will be given the net of

God's Word, and the ship of faith, and the anchor of hope, and all those other Biblical metaphors that Jesus uses to relate the truth about Himself to those who need help understanding. And all those tools are now Peter's. You see, for Jesus, only sinners who **know** they are sinners in need of help are really useful for service. Those who think they're good enough without Jesus are left to their own devices.

So what do we do with all this?

APPLICATION:

There are probably a lot of applications that can be drawn out of this passage. I've pulled three of them for us this morning. The first one deals with ...

1. WORSHIP: The depth of our worship is dependent on an awareness of the depth of our own sinfulness. You see this throughout the Bible:

In **Job 40:4**, Job says, *"I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will put my hand over my mouth in silence."* In the NIV it says, *"I am unworthy..."* and in the New American Standard it says, *"Behold, I am insignificant..."*

Later in **Job 42:5-6**, he says, *"I had heard about You [God] before, but now I have seen You with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."*

Same with the Apostle John, who writes in **Revelation 1:17a**, *"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. ..."*

To be honest, this is the proper response to God.

Look at **Isaiah 6:5**, *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."* (NIV)

Isaiah's first thought was not adoration, but fear. He was overcome by the knowledge of his own sin when in the presence of God's holiness.

And Peter's no different. But if you think about it, this is really a great grace from God, being able to see your own sin, because understanding your sinful position is absolutely necessary if you are to understand and receive the greater grace of forgiveness of sin.

You can't ask to be forgiven of something you won't acknowledge.

Peter is in the position of total surrender and humility ... of acknowledging before God that he is in spiritual bondage, that he's spiritually blind and bruised, and that his spiritual poverty makes him dependent upon the grace and mercy of God.

But that's why Jesus is here. Remember He said in **Luke 4:18-19**, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He has appointed Me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the*

time of the Lord's favor has come."

Peter is doing the right thing here. He knows he's unworthy, but not being spiritually wise, he asks Jesus to go away. Later on, at the end of Jesus' time here on earth, Peter will receive this lesson again. His awareness of his own sin will drive him to Christ, not away from him. Instead of asking Christ to leave, he'll run to him. This lesson is in ...

John 21:3-7, *"Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' 'We'll come, too,' they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night. [4] At dawn the disciples saw Jesus standing on the beach, but they couldn't see who He was. [5] He called out, 'Friends, have you caught any fish?' 'No,' they replied.*

[6] Then He said, 'Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get plenty of fish!' So they did, and they couldn't draw in the net because there were so many fish in it.

[7] Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and swam ashore."

Peter stood before Jesus, his beard dripping wet, breathless from his plunge into the water and charge to shore. Peter ran to Jesus because he knew himself for what he was ... a frail, weak sinner. But he also ran because he knew so much better now who Jesus was ... the Son of God and Savior of sinners.

Simply put, a major part of our worship is running to Jesus. The more we know of our sin and the more we know of Jesus, the more we'll want to go to Him.

He and only He is the One who forgives.

He and only He is the One who takes our sins away.

He and only He is the One who can put our lives back together.

We must understand that we're real sinners.

We must also understand that Jesus is a real Savior.

Our sin should drive us to our Savior.

It's the only answer that makes any sense.

The second application concerns our ...

2. WILL: The surrender of our will is dependent on an awareness of Who is calling us, not on what He is asking us to do.

Peter said, *"Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around You. ... Jesus replied to Simon, 'Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!'"*

The phrase Jesus uses that is translated here as "fishing for people" is a combination of two Greek words that literally mean to "catch men alive." Peter had been catching live fish so they could die and be sold. Now he's told to catch dead men and women so they could be made alive by the power of Christ.

Peter's new mission is to catch men for life.

And as we know, that's what happened in Peter's life. Starting with Pentecost when 3,000 people came to Christ in Acts 2 and then to 5,000 by the end of Acts 4. And throughout Peter's life that number just kept growing.

What a great description of the Gospel ... "Catching people for life."

Verse 11 says, "*And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*" The word, "Followed" is a verb used nine times in Luke for Christian discipleship. All four gospel writers use the term in the sense of a self-commitment which breaks all other ties. Note "***they left everything***" to follow Jesus. God still calls men and women today to leave old lives behind and become so committed to Him that they become known as followers ... Followers of Christ ... people who have been "caught alive."

At one point or another most of the people in this room were "caught alive" by God's Grace and the message of New Life in Christ. Some of you are still trying to get through the net. Perhaps you've come to see that you are a sinful person and are afraid of coming too close.

But Jesus says, "Don't be afraid! I am what you need."

Remember when the Apostle John fell down in fear?

Look what Jesus said then. **Revelation 1:17-18**, "*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."*

And if that's true, and I've bet my life that it is, then those of us who've been "caught alive" ought to be about the fishing business. Or, to put it another way, those of us who've **grasped** God's Grace for ourselves should be in the practice of **giving** God's Grace to others.

This is just talking about our ...

3. WITNESS: The scope of our witness is dependent on an awareness of His power not ours.

Our witness simply means living for Christ as we go about our everyday life. It's not a special program or function. It's simply bringing Christ with us wherever we go ... at home, at work, in the neighborhood, in the marketplace.

It's not something you go do when you have time for it. Notice that Jesus didn't come to Peter in the quiet time of relaxation and rest. It came in the midst of the crowded and busy lives of commercial fishermen.

Witness is not what you do, it's what you are.

Jesus not only gave that command to Peter, He gave it to all of us.

Acts 1:8 says, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" (NIV)

The New Living says, "*you will ... tell people about me everywhere ...*"

But there's a few things you need to know about being a witness.

First,

- **No fish comes unless they are drawn.**

You are not the Holy Spirit. You can tell people about Jesus, but you can't change their hearts. Turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh is God's job, not yours. You can't make someone come to Christ. They must be drawn to Him.

John 6:44 says, "*For people can't come to Me [Jesus] unless the Father who sent Me draws them to Me, and at the last day I will raise them from the dead.*"

Second,

- **We are responsible for obedience.**

Peter had lots of good reasons not to go fishing now. In terms of logic, Peter won hands down. But Peter obeyed simply because Jesus said so. What other reason do we need to obey? We can rationalize our way out of anything. We demand reasons and conditions to do what followers of Christ are called to do. Peter didn't want to go back out, but because Jesus said, he did ... simple obedience.

In **Matthew 28:18-20**, "*Jesus came and told His disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. [19] Therefore, **go and make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. [20] **Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.** And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Everyone of us can come up with reasons why we can't make disciples, or be disciples, or teach, or obey ... at this time, sure we'll do it later on when we have some more time, but not now.

But Jesus doesn't give us that out. He says, "Do this."

"I have the authority, I will be with you ... do this."

Jesus isn't waiting for our reasons, just our obedience.

Third,

- **He is responsible for results.**

Look at these fishermen. They went out by themselves and caught nothing. They surely knew what they were doing, they were professional fishermen. They weren't lazy, it says they worked hard. They hadn't lacked perseverance, it says they worked all night. There wasn't a lack of fish, Jesus filled their boats.

Then why were their results so bad?

Because they had no power in and of themselves apart from Jesus. The Bible teaches that without Him we can do nothing, but with Christ we can do all things. Jesus brought the fish, Jesus brings the people.

The only power the church has is the presence of Christ in its midst. Jesus said, **John 3:14-15**, "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of*

Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.”

In the Message, Eugene Peterson draws those verses out. There it reads, *“In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up - and everyone who looks up to Him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.”*

We lift Jesus up and He draws all people to Himself. Our job is to lift Jesus up, His job is to draw people and change their hearts.

Fourth,

- **Past failure does not disqualify present participation.**

Look at Peter again. This is a man who opened his mouth to change feet. His list of failures were known to everyone, everywhere he went. He was the man who denied Christ three times the cock crowed. Tradition tells us that everywhere he went to preach for the rest of his life, people heckled him by crowing like a rooster, reminding him of his great failure.

But in John 21, Jesus repeats this miracle, restores Peter, and sends him out to feed my sheep, take care of my flock, love my people.

And there are too many people here today who think, “I can’t do that. I’m not good enough, smart enough, brave enough ... and besides, if you knew what I was really like, you would never ask me to do this.”

And if it was up to me, you’re probably right, I might not ask.

But Jesus does. He says, “Do this, tell people about me.” And He already knows what you’re really like. He knows the very worst about you. And He loves you anyway ... and tells you to go out and “catch men alive.”

Luke wants us to see that the Jesus story is not only about Him, but also about us. These texts **reveal** God at work; and shows us how God reveals His power in order to call people like Peter, people who think they’re **not good enough** to follow Christ. God takes people who are “outsiders” and makes them “insiders” ... people who are involved in a relationship with the God of the universe. People who are called to live a life that looks to God because He has poured out His grace on those of us who realize that we really are sinners who don’t deserve to be “caught alive.”

But that’s the essence of grace ... getting what you don’t deserve.

Luke tells the story of how **Jesus revealed that grace**, died to provide it, rose again to bestow it, and will return to establish its presence over all of creation. The church **must show** what **such grace looks like** ... starting by bringing that grace to those who are afraid because they know they’re sinners and want to run away ... even when they’re sitting next to us.

And all those who want to “be caught alive” said, “Amen.”