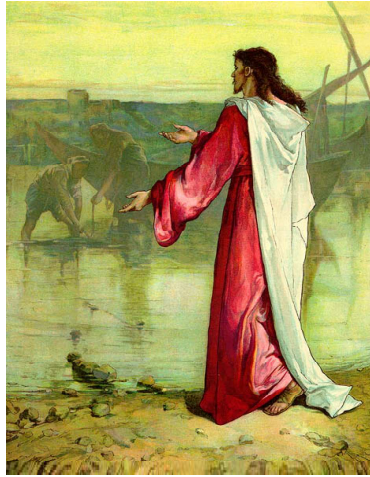


# THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

July 8, 2012



*“Called to be Fishers of Men for the Kingdom of God”*

Sermon Text: Luke 5:1-11

*“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, 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 was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.”*

Fellow Redeemed of Christ,

The World calls to us. In popular magazines and music, in television programs and in the movies of today, the World calls to us to ignore the Law of God written in our hearts and reject the perfect Law of God written in the Bible, insisting rather that we become even more like the World in accepting and adopting for ourselves and our children, it's present morality – (or rather lack thereof).

Most of the time these calls are very subtle. For you see, the Prince of this World, the Devil, wants you to become desensitized to the immorality around you, so that you view all sin, be it

sexual sin, riotous living, materialism, hedonistic living for pleasure and self, or murder of infants in the womb as not only 'acceptable', but also most preferable to the life you have been called to as a child of God.

The World calls to our children in the public schools of this country, teaching them in 'health classes' that there is no need for sexual abstinence or self-control, much less obedience to any kind of moral law, as they are no higher life-form than any other animal, and so are free to act as any animal might in every situation they encounter.

In these same classrooms, homosexuality is taught; not as being sin, not as the abomination unto God as is clearly stated in *both* the Old and New Testaments of God's Word (Lev.18:22 and Rom.1:24-27). Rather, as the imagined wisdom of man's modern 'scientific' studies indicate, it is a simple matter of 'sexual orientation' – a genetically determined predisposition of the individual *before* birth and therefore an 'alternative life-style' to be, not only 'tolerated' (as was demanded just a few years ago) but both '*accepted and respected*', as is now sinfully mandated by our government.

In further direct conflict with the Word of God, these same 'learned' people contend that abortion is not the taking of human life, but a 'choice', which should be freely exercised when the selfishly destructive methods of our nation's condom-culture fail.

Our children and we are further assaulted by a media complex, which targets our faith-life for destruction. Espousing 'self-esteem' (which is nothing more than idolatry), glamorizing fornication and adultery, and endorsing gross materialism, we are encouraged by the world to 'live for the moment', to think 'me first' and to trust in what we can accomplish in and of ourselves.

Yes, the Devil, the World, and our own sinful flesh is always on the offensive, calling and enjoining us to surrender to the pride of life and the unholy lusts of our flesh - to forget that we are children of God, buried by baptism to a life of righteousness in Christ. These would have us leave God out of our lives entirely, or at least relegate Him to a one-day-a-week social event at a place called 'church' where what little spiritual food offered is contaminated with the insidious poison of doctrinal error and complacency.

And so the World calls to us - first to ignore our accountability to God's Law by citing so-called scientific studies or politically-correct excuses for sin, and then calling us to remove God completely from our lives by embracing the world and joining its hurried head-long journey down the path of unrepented sin to eternal damnation in hell.

Dear Ones, Let us not heed the call of the World!

Rather, on the basis of our sermon text for today, let us learn and hold fast within our hearts:

- I. That we are called to reject the wisdom of this world and trust our Lord,
- II. That we are called to fear no more, and
- III. That we are called to be '*Fishers of Men for the Kingdom of God*'.

{Prayer:} Dear Heavenly Father, Open our hearts today to Your Holy Word, that through the moving of Your Holy Spirit, we might be strengthened and sanctified to serve You all the days of our life. We pray this in the name of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Having left the city of Capernaum with the intention of walking along the shore of the Lake of Galilee, Jesus is followed, then hemmed in and pressed upon by a great multitude of people desiring to hear Him preach the Word of God. The crowd was so pressing upon Jesus, that His ability to effectively speak to them was physically impeded. So Jesus looks about Himself for a way to improve the situation. Seeing two fishing boats with Simon Peter, James and John washing their nets nearby, Jesus steps into Peter's boat and asks him to go out a little way from shore so that he might from that vantage point teach the people without difficulty.

Let us pause for a moment to take instruction here as we make note of the fact that Jesus does not let a difficult situation nor location dissuade Him from preaching God's Word. Jesus doesn't tell the people to wait until the Sabbath to hear Him in the temple or in some other building, but wherever and whenever He has opportunity, He is about spreading the news of the Gospel.

Likewise, we don't need a fancy church building, nor do we need to wait until regular worship on Sunday to tell the people we have occasion to come into contact with about the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus. For there is nothing more needed by mankind, nothing more urgent than the preaching of the Word, which brings the news of the free gift of salvation from sin and death to the entire world.

Returning to our text, we read that Jesus having finished teaching the people, commands Simon Peter to take the boat out to deep water, and then to let down his nets that they might make a catch of fish.

Now Peter has fished this lake many times and he knows from experience, what you might call 'scientific study', that the fishing is best at night and at places in the lake where there are ledges, not out in the deepest part of the lake where Jesus directs him to go. Jesus, of course knows this as well, but He desires to test Peter's faith.

Peter addresses Jesus as 'Master' and proceeds to tell Him that they have just spent a most unproductive night working hard, casting their nets in unfulfilled hopes of a catch. It is a simple statement of fact that Peter is making here, not an objection to Jesus' command. For immediately following this statement, we hear Simon Peter ready and willing to lay aside all human logic, all his years of experiences and all his knowledge as a fisherman to trust and obey His Savior. He says in effect: "...because you say so, I will let down the nets."

Letting the nets down, Peter and his men suddenly find the nets engulfing such a large number of fish that the nets are beginning to tear. The men become so taxed in their efforts to pull up the nets, they do not even have the breath to call to their friends in the other boat and so frantically wave to them to come and help! Soon the other boat is there and it is not long before both boats are so full of fish, they are in danger of sinking from the weight of it all.

So it is with all Christians, wherever you might be, whatever the Christian endeavor, be it working to properly raise your children or the struggles involved in working to realize growth in a congregation. Oftentimes, despite our best efforts to accomplish these goals and our drive to have success in those areas, we fail. This is usually because somewhere along the way we lost sight of the fact that it is *not* our own experiences, human reasoning, or 'scientific'

approach to the task at hand, but rather it is the wonderful power of the Word of God in the proper application of His Law and Gospel, that brings success... and that... in abundance.

Dear Friends, If we will but place all our cares at His feet and fully trust in Him in all that we do, the same God who loved us so dearly in Christ that He sent His Only Son to suffer and die for our sins, so that we might have eternal life with Him in heaven will surely bless us with all things, both temporal and spiritual, that we have need of in this life – Yes?

So do not be fearful or discouraged when you are struggling with some task in this life, when all your hopes seem for naught and all your prayer and efforts seem to have no effect on the situation at hand. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, look to His Word and follow His guidance. Don't depend on the wisdom of this world nor upon your own human reasoning and understanding. Walk by the gift of faith God has given you, not by fallible human sight. For contrary to what the Devil and this evil World would have you believe, the Creator of all things, the Lord of all Creation, is not sitting in heaven, wringing His hands in despair at how He is going to provide you with everything you need for this life! He has promised to be with you and He has promised to provide all that you need - and with great increase in due season.

Returning to our text, we find Peter profoundly affected by this miraculous event. It is the first time he has been so intimately involved in one of Jesus' miracles, for he is not just a spectator here, but a direct recipient of the effects of Jesus' miracle. You see, all this occurs on *his own* boat, in *his own* presence, with *his own* nets... and after he *himself* has had such a frustrating unproductive night of fishing in waters he knows from years of experience are normally better suited for catching fish than those deep waters to which Jesus has led him. Peter has been brought so personally close to the almighty power of Jesus' godhead that he suddenly comes to a fuller realization of the pure sinlessness - yea, the divinity - of Jesus. And with this realization, Peter is further struck with the terrifying reminder of his own wretched sinfulness and reacting in fear cries out for the Lord to leave him.

This at first may seem a little strange to our ears, but it *is* the natural reaction of sinful man. Since the fall of man into sin and on account of his sin, this has been and always will be sinful man's response to the presence of God. For natural man, that is, unregenerate man, is at enmity with God. The first man, Adam, was created holy - perfectly sinless - and he initially enjoyed a perfect harmonious relationship with his Creator in the Garden of Eden. But after Adam sinned, he became terrified of God. He knew the consequences of violating God's command – God's Law – and feared God's righteous wrath. He did his best to hide from God because he knew he could not rightly stand before the Righteous God of Creation. But God came and found Adam. God called Adam to Himself, God demanded an accounting of Adam's violation of God's perfect Law, God worked repentance in Adam's heart and made the first announcement of the Gospel to man (Genesis chapter 3) and sealed the Devil's fate.

Peter had always felt his own sinfulness in Jesus' presence, but now in utter astonishment at what has transpired he is completely physically, emotionally and spiritually overwhelmed. He is dumbfounded and humbled even more so as he is struck with how utterly unworthy he is to be in the presence of Jesus. So now a sinful Peter desiring to be free from the presence of Jesus' sinlessness and pure righteousness, falls to his knees at Jesus' feet and cries: "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*"

What a confession of faith! In this simple sentence, Peter here confesses his own wretched sinfulness and at the same time expresses true repentance and his belief that Jesus is God and Lord, in whose holy presence he is unworthy to remain.

Lest Peter is left to fall into despair and damning unbelief, Jesus immediately says to him: “*Fear not...*” And it is with these words that Peter is reminded that Jesus, is the Messiah, the Promised One, through whom he possesses the forgiveness of his sins, life and salvation.

Jesus then tells Peter, James and John: “...*from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*” With these words, Jesus calls Peter, James and John to be fishers of men. In service to God and their fellow men, from that moment on, they were to use the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a net to draw the souls of men to God, to bring the very elect into God’s Kingdom. And this was to be their full-time occupation. Furthermore, as evidenced by the miracle of the day’s catch, it was God who could...and would... provide the increase. So it was that Peter, James and John left all that they had and followed Jesus.

And so it is with us today as well. To all that by knowledge of the Law of God, are sorely distressed by their sins, sincerely confess their sins and heartily repent of them, Jesus says: “*Fear not.*”... You are forgiven all of your sins ... not because of anything you have done, but because I have ransomed you with my sinless life, with my suffering and death upon the Cross of Calvary. Furthermore, I promise I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you. And so, no longer are you to live in fear of the Law, no longer are you to live in fear of need or want, and no more are you to live in fear of eternal death. For in the face of My Gospel, fear is the Devil’s Lie. The Debt of Sin has been paid. Peace with God has been made and everlasting life in the blessedness of heaven is yours through Me Alone.

Dear Friends, You and I as Children of God through faith in Christ Jesus are called by God to be fishers of men too. Though you may be young or old, man or woman, boy or girl; each of you have been given by God either the ability to tell someone you know about their Savior Jesus, or you have the opportunity to invite friends and neighbors to learn about Him in Sunday school, church, or in private worship at home. Because Jesus loved you and died on the cross for you, I encourage each of you to make it a personal goal to invite at least one person every week to learn about Jesus and what He did for them by His suffering and death.

As Peter, James and John were willing to leave everything and follow Jesus, so too, we ought to be not only willing, but also excited and extremely motivated by true thankfulness for what Jesus has done for each of us that we should *want* to tell others about Him. For we have been called to reject the wisdom of this sinful world and to trust our Lord, we have been called to no longer live in fear and we have been called to be *Fishers of men for the Kingdom of God.*

Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

