

A Flawed Fisherman

Luke 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

- A. A man had been out fishing all day, but he had caught nothing.
 - 1. He had, however, promised his wife some fresh fish that she could prepare for supper.
 - 2. Thus, before he went home, he stopped by a fresh seafood market and selected three fat fish. He said to the manager, “Before you wrap them, could you toss them to me, one by one? That way I’ll be able to tell my wife I caught them & be speaking the truth.”
- B. While commercial fishing is a major industry in parts of this country, around here we fish for pleasure. We can, after all, stop by a fish market on the way home & pick up some fresh fish.
 - 1. But, in first-century Palestine, fishing was big business.
 - a. Jesus called his first disciples – Peter, Andrew, James, & John – while they were fishing for business (Mk 1:16-20).
 - b. On two occasions, Jesus fed the multitudes with fish & bread (Mt 14:13-21; Mt 15:32-39).
 - c. After the Resurrection, Jesus ate a piece of boiled fish with the disciples (Lk 24:42-43).
 - 2. Yet, even in the days of Jesus, some fishermen didn’t have much luck.
 - a. This morning’s text is about a fisherman who didn’t have any luck – in fact, not a single fish had been caught.
 - 1) READ TEXT.
 - 2) Peter is “***A Flawed Fisherman***.”
 - b. But, what makes Peter “***A Flawed Fisherman***”? It is the fact that he is A FRUITLESS FISHERMAN, A FAVORED FISHERMAN, A FEARFUL FISHERMAN, & A FOLLOWING FISHERMAN.

A FRUITLESS FISHERMAN, vv 4-5

- A. Peter was fruitless & caught nothing.
- B. “He said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ And Simon answered, ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!’”
- C. Why is it that Simon, James, & John caught nothing all night?
 - 1. Simply put: They were fishing their own way, by their own standards.
 - a. Why not? These were men who made a living fishing – they knew quite well how to fish.
 - b. Yet, it is only when Jesus comes along & tells them how to let down their nets that they catch many fish.
 - 2. Obviously, Peter, James, & John did no wrong when they fished according to the best standards of their day.
- D. Yet, is it not the case that lives are often fruitless because people – in the spirit of Frank Sinatra – do it their way?
 - 1. Is it not that selfish desire to live life by one’s own rules that first brought sin into the world?
 - a. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6).
 - b. Eve saw that the fruit looked so very luscious & that by eating it she could become like God himself; thus, she ate.
 - c. Eve did things her own way & brought sin, death, & destruction into this world.
 - 2. Was it not Herodias’ desire to do things her own way that resulted in the death of John the Baptist?
 - a. She had married her brother-in-law in violation of the Law (Mk 6:17).
 - b. She held a grudge against John for preaching that it was not lawful for Herod to have her (Mk 6:18-19).
 - c. When her daughter pleased Herod with her lewd dancing, Herodias found an opportunity to have John beheaded (Mk 6:22-28).
 - 3. Is it not the case that Jesus Christ was crucified because you & I so often do things our own way?
 - a. “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3).
 - b. “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19).
- E. Do we continue to do things our own way?
 - 1. Are we so caught up in what feels good that we do not seek the way of the Lord?
 - 2. Are we so bent on enjoying life to the fullest that we forget to stop & serve those in need?

A FAVORED FISHERMAN, vv 5-7

- A. The moment Peter stopped fishing his own way & began fishing Jesus' way, he found favor, a blessing, from the Lord.
- B. "Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.' And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 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."
- C. Jesus tells Peter where he can go to find a decent catch of fish & Peter obeys at once.
- Put yourself in Peter's shoes for just a moment.
 - You've been fishing all night long & have nothing to take to the market.
 - Your kid needs braces, your wife desperately needs a new car that's not going to break down every time she goes to work, & the bank is threatening to foreclose on the house.
 - You've worked for hours trying to make ends meet, but you have nothing to show for it.
 - Here comes someone along & says, "If you'd just go right over there, you'd have a nice catch of fish." What are you going to say?
 - Peter understands it's not just anyone telling him where to let down his net – it's the Master of earth & sky; therefore, this "**Flawed Fisherman**" obeys.
 - Are we, like Peter, obeying the Master of earth & sky?
 - The Lord expects such obedience.
 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15).
 - "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn 15:14).
 - Do we seek to obey the Lord Jesus?
 - When his pager went off during a council meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, police chief Phil Keith was startled to see that the call was from his mother.
 - Concerned, he rushed to the press table & phoned her.
 - "Phil Keith, are you chewing gum?" asked his mother, who had been watching the council meeting on cable TV.
 - "Yes, ma'am."
 - "Well, it looks awful. Spit it out."
 - Keith dutifully removed the gum & went back to his meeting.
 - Because Keith received that call from someone he loved & respected, he obeyed. How much do we love & respect the Lord Jesus? How much do we obey?
- D. When Peter lets down his nets were Jesus told him, he received great favor, for this "**Flawed Fisherman**" caught so many fish that his nets were breaking.
- Peter found great favor from the Lord when he obeyed; he was greatly blessed.
 - If we obey, we, too, shall be greatly favored.
 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (Jn 8:51).
 - "Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him" (1 Jn 3:22).
- E. Are you receiving abundant blessings because you are obedient?

A FEARFUL FISHERMAN, vv 8-10

- A. After Peter receives great blessings from the Lord, he becomes quite fearful.
- B. "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 that they had taken, 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.'"
- C. Peter bows before Jesus' feet & he implores the Lord to leave.
- From a business standpoint, what Peter does here makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.
 - He has found One who could make him absolutely the best fisherman in the history of the world.
 - Had Peter been a great businessman, you would expect him to offer Jesus anything he wanted to get him to stay.
 - Yet, Peter is by no means interested in such material things. He understands that he, a sinful human being, is in the presence of the perfectly Holy.
 - Fear was a common reaction when sinful man encountered the holy God.
 - After Adam & Eve first sinned, "they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:8).
 - When Isaiah saw the Lord high & lifted up, he exclaimed, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the

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LORD of hosts!" (Is 6:5).

- b. Why was fear such a common reaction?
 - 1) Simply put, God is perfectly holy & those who saw him understood their own deplorable sinfulness.
 - 2) God is so holy. "Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he! Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!" (Ps 99:3, 5).
 - 3) Man – whether he was Peter or you or me – has no goodness of his own within him.
 - a) "As he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone'" (Mk 10:17-18).
 - b) "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Rom 3:10-12).
- c. We want so desperately to believe in the goodness of man.
 - 1) How many times do you go to the funeral home & hear comments like, "He was such a good person; I know he made it to heaven"?
 - 2) Hogwash! If it were left up to my goodness, I'd end up in hell!
 - a) I know my own heart & I see the ugliness of sin deep within it.
 - b) I do not deserve a single good thing God has done in my life.
- D. Peter comes to that realization here & comes & bows before the Lord in humble submission with the full weight of his sin weighing him down. It is from that realization that I chose to title this sermon "***A Flawed Fisherman.***"
- E. Some may not appreciate being told just how sinful & despicable you really are; others may wonder about the wisdom of leaving a "sour taste" in our mouths.
 1. Why mention the fact that we are such despicable, sinful people?
 - a. That realization prompts us to serve God all the more.
 - 1) When I realize that God has been so very good to me out of his own mercy & love, I will want to serve him with every ounce of my being.
 - 2) That is precisely what happened with the Apostle Paul: "I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Cor 15:9-10).
 - b. The Lord tells Peter something quite comparable here.
 - 1) Peter isn't to lie around in self-pity. Rather, he is to serve his fellow man & his God by sharing the gift of grace he has found.
 - 2) Do we, because of the grace God has bestowed upon us serve him & our fellow man?
 - a) Do we seek to tell others of the blessings we have found in Jesus?
 - b) Do we seek to ease the hurts of others with the comfort we have found from God?

A FOLLOWING FISHERMAN, vv 10-11

- A. After Jesus bestows grace upon him, Peter becomes "*A Following Fisherman.*"
- B. "Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him."
- C. Peter, James, & John bring their boats back to the land & leave everything to follow Jesus.
 1. That's the most amazing statement in this text; these three fishermen leave ***everything*** to follow Jesus.
 - a. They left a good business.
 - 1) They just had an amazing catch of fish; James & John were doing so well that they had employees (Mk 1:20).
 - 2) But, these three understood that God is more important than money.
 - a) "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24).
 - b) "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim 6:9-10).
 - 3) Do we understand that God is more important than money?
 - a) Are we willing to fudge our income tax returned to get a little more back, or do we keep our integrity & lose the extra money?
 - b) Do we have enough to buy whatever we want but only enough to drop a buck or two in the collection plate?
 - b. They left their families.

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- 1) James & John “left their father Zebedee in the boat” (Mk 1:20); Jesus commended the disciples for leaving their families (Matt 19:27-30).
 - 2) These three understood that God is more important than family.
 - a) “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26).
 - b) “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matt 19:29).
 - 3) Do we really understand that God is more important than family?
 - a) Are we willing to serve the Lord regardless of what our family thinks?
 - b) Are we willing to lead our family in doing what’s right because we understand the Lord & his way are so very important?
2. These three fishermen left everything in order to follow Jesus.
- a. The idea of following Jesus is that these disciples attempted to live as Jesus did.
 - 1) “Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 Jn 2:6).
 - 2) Jesus left “you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).
 - b. Many years ago, a train was pulling into the depot.
 - 1) On the platform stood a very small, crippled boy.
 - a) His basket was filled with fruit & nuts to sell to the passengers.
 - b) The train had not yet come to a complete stop, when a businessman had swung himself from the train & in his haste collided with the boy on the platform.
 - i. The basket was overturned & its contents scattered.
 - ii. The man saw what had happened, but, as the crippled boy was the only one concerned & the man was in a hurry, he walked away without a single word.
 - 2) Just then the train stopped & a traveling man stepped off.
 - a) He, too, had important business in the city, but he saw that a little boy was in trouble.
 - b) The man said nothing, but set down his bag, and quietly assisted the boy in gathering what fruit & packages could be rescued from the hurrying feet.
 - i. The task was completed & the traveler was about to leave when he reached into his pocket, and taking out a silver dollar, he placed it on top of the basket.
 - ii. As he did so, the boy looked up with tears streaming down his faced and asked, “Mister, be you Jesus?”
3. That’s what it means to be a disciple of Jesus – to act in such a way that others see Jesus in us.
- a. Are others able to see Jesus in you? Are you following Jesus?
 - b. Do you need to come this morning & give up everything to follow Jesus?