

The Call: Past, Present and Future. In Five S's Luke 5:1-11

¹One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, ²he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. ⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

INTRODUCTION

When people first read the Gospel of Luke we are confronted with the question, who is Jesus? I mean, what man submits to a baptism of repentance without confessing any sin; on which the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a Dove. What man will not compromise despite pressure from Satan and Synagogue? What man casts out demons and heals diseases with a word or a touch; and teaches with authority, not as the scribes?

In Luke chapter 5 this Gospel writer continues his examination of that question, but begins to address another one as well: Whatever kind of man this is, **what does it mean to be His follower?** For us, that is a very pertinent question indeed. To answer it, we must seek to understand: What it means to receive the call to follow Jesus and today that is exactly what I would like to spend some time examining.

I will be pointing out five key things that I believe we can observe in this passage regarding the way that Jesus calls to each of us to join Him in ministry. These five points all begin with the letter “S” and I have termed them “Five S’s of the call”.

The first of these five S’s is the Story of our call.

I. Story: Every call has a back-story

We must always ask this of any passage or interaction that we study in scripture. As our own Dr. McMickle has made clear to us in our studies and a solid hermeneutical approach to Bible study have taught us that no passage of scripture is meant to be preached in isolation. Therefore we must ask, What is the back story of the connection between Jesus and Peter? What had happened prior to this incident at the lake? And how did God set the stage for the events that transpired on this day. Was there an ongoing transformation at work in the lives of these men that had led them to the events of this day over the course of many years, or was there simply a sudden and radical change that was fully imparted during this morning by the lake?

Let's take just a few moments to examine some of the scriptures that lead us to this passage in Luke. If you have a Bible today, please turn to Luke 4:31 where we find that "[Jesus] he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people" in vs 32 we find that "They [the people of this town] were amazed at [the teaching of Jesus] his teaching, because his message had authority. There in the synagogue we find Jesus healing a man possessed by a demon in vs 33 and then in vs 37-40 will you look with me as I read these four verses.

"And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who

had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them".

While this was a powerful encounter in the home of Simon Peter, I would suggest that this is not his first encounter with Jesus.

Their first meeting is recorded in John 1:35-42. It apparently took place right after Jesus returned from the Temptation in the Wilderness, before leaving on his first preaching tour. He reconnected with his cousin John the Baptist, who at that meeting pronounced him "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." One of John's disciples, Andrew, heard him say this, followed Jesus, and became his disciple. The first thing he did after that was to introduce Jesus to his brother, Simon. Probably not too long after that, Jesus met the Bar Jonah boys again, along with their friends and business partners the Zebedes, James and John, in Mat. 4:12-23.

I believe it is imperative then when we as pastors and leaders in the church present this passage that we keep in mind the groundwork that John the Baptist had already laid here for Jesus and the family connections that lie in the background. God speaks to individuals, but He also moves in family relationships to touch people. I believe that when we present this passage as an individual moment without the context of the back-story of the call we miss the importance of the work of God among two families. First the family of Jesus and the ministry of John that truly did "clear the way for the Messiah". Secondly for the family of Peter and Andrew, represent brothers that heard and reacted to the call of Christ in the context of family. They heard Jesus teaching in the synagogue, saw him heal and even invited Jesus into their house prior to this event.

We know that Peter was a good Jew (Chastised for this by Paul in Acts). For the Jewish man, His was a faith of the family and His people, it was not a faith to follow alone, but one that had history.

For each of us, this is still the case in some way. There is a back-story of faith that has come through our families, our brothers, sisters, Mothers and fathers, friends, grandparents aunts and uncles. A back-story that includes the church fathers, church councils and the "family" of God's kingdom that has come before us. What was your back-story prior to your call? Perhaps you have seen Jesus as the word has been taught, perhaps you have invited Jesus to heal your family members and invited Him into your home, but has He called you yet? What is your back-story of faith?

OK, back to this passage...

It is obvious that when the Luke 5 passage begins, these men are aware of the ministry of John the Baptist and now of Jesus but are still living at home and continuing to work their 'secular jobs' as fishermen; they have just been out all night as fishermen often were and were cleaning refuse and debris from their nets. After what happened on this morning, they will never clean nets again. Something will compel them to leave everything and follow Jesus in a way that they had not done yet. What was it? and why did it have that effect? What made the call of this day so significant for these men?

O.K., Jesus is in town, and the people are crowding around him on the shore they remember how he had already healed so many of them, Jesus sees Simon's boat and it makes a good platform from which to teach. Jesus was initially utilizing the boat as a pulpit. What was he teaching the people? It is fitting that we ask such a question, and what I would suggest is that what Simon Peter and his friends were listening to as they worked on their nets off to the side was the general content of Jesus' preaching at this early point in His ministry. That the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, that to enter it you need a greater righteousness than that practiced by the

Pharisees, and that therefore you should repent, accepting the rule of God that is coming through Christ himself.

To Peter and his friends it probably sounded vaguely messianic, and they no doubt listened to the Rabbi approvingly. When Jesus was done speaking to the crowd, the carpenter turned Rabbi directed the fishermen by saying in Luke 5:4-6 "to go into deeper water and drop your nets".

I believe there are a couple of things worth considering regarding these instructions. First we can plainly see here the transition between trusting the teacher to utilize our job and our tools as a platform for speaking His message. But Jesus did not stop there when these men trusted Him; Jesus also chose to change them as workers and instructed professional fishermen, in just how He wanted them to fish.

I know many sermons speak to the faith of Peter in following the command of Jesus even though "they had been out all night", but perhaps this was not such a large act of faith. Perhaps Peter assumed that Jesus was done speaking to the crowds and that this was the teacher's way to bring this teaching moment to an end. Peter perhaps was happy to oblige the teacher in His 'escape'. Perhaps Peter was excited to be alone with this teacher. Perhaps he hoped to get a special word of encouragement or teaching from the Rabbi when they were alone together.

We simply do not know, but one thing I want to suggest is that actually catching fish was the last thing that Peter thought would happen next!

And this is...

II. Shock: The Shocking Nature of the Call

As far as any serious fishing was concerned, Peter probably did not think that it was going to happen. It was now mid morning, the worst time to fish. The best time was sunrise and

right before, Peter knew that there would be no fish out there at that time. There was no way you would catch any, it was too late. There weren't any fish in the area. All Peter's long years of professional experience told him it was hopeless. Yet he obeyed--maybe just to humor Jesus or provide an excuse for his ending the meeting with the crowds along the shoreline. And then-- what's this? The net is about to break and swamp the boat! Even with the help of the other boat they were barely able to get this stupendous haul of fish safely back to shore.

I would love to have been able to see the expression on Jesus' face as he watched these shocked men struggling with their sudden good fortune@work. I wonder if Jesus shook his head over them and shrugged; I wonder if he laughed out loud and clapped. It may have been a combination of all these reactions, mingled with the one thing that was never absent from the face of Jesus His deep love for these men.

Commentators have bestowed much ink on trying to figure out what the nature was of this miracle. We know there should not have been any fish there to catch. Did Jesus create a school of fish ex nihilo, out of nothing? Did he summon them from wherever they were across the lake? Or did he just happen to know through his omniscient insight that they had showed up? In one sense it doesn't matter, but in another I think the context requires a particular answer. To have merely known connects with nothing that has been happening; to have created them would be unneeded. Luke has been giving us a series of examples that illustrate Jesus' authority, his Lordship. Demons obey him; Peter obeys him; the fish obey him. I personally believe that Jesus summoned the fish to them. The message of the miracle is that the One who is sovereign over Creation is here before us. And Peter is about to show us that he got the point. Jesus is in command of all that lives. What a shocking moment in the call!

III. Selection: The Direct Nature of the Call

Peter had seen other miracles--the miracles of healing--already, and had assuredly been impressed by them. But this one hit home in a new way. Fishing was **his** profession. He knew that there was no way those fish ought to be in that net; no way they could be in that net. But there they were. What man can summon a school of fish without even saying a word, and they obey him? Only one Person in the universe has that kind of authority, and this Jewish boy named Simon Peter knew who it was.

How much of knowing exactly who Christ was I don't know, but the reaction of Simon Peter is the reaction of a pious Jew who has just seen God. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord!" he said, and in these words we clearly hear the echo of Isaiah 6:1-8. "Woe is me, for I am undone! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I have seen the Lord of Hosts." In both passages there is a direct encounter with the living God in which a man is being called into his service. In both of these God's man is struck with an overwhelming sense of his unworthiness. In both of these passages God does not disagree with the accuracy of the man's cry of unworthiness, but accepts him anyway out of grace and sends him forth as his messenger. Oh, yes. The very same thing is happening on both occasions because it is the very same Person with whom the sinful man is dealing. And while Peter might not have fully understood it, he sensed it right down to the very marrow of his bones that this man in his boat was GOD!

The appropriateness of this miracle to Peter's situation is truly remarkable. Not only was it designed to get his attention, much as the healings might impress a physician, or a raising from the dead an undertaker, or the feeding of the five thousand a farmer, grocer or cook, but it was also simultaneously designed to answer the questions that Peter must have been silently asking himself, **who is this man?** Maybe he was sitting there wanting to go with Jesus and wondering

how he could. What would happen to his business? How would he support his extended family? And who am I to think I am worthy to be one of the Messiah's closest associates anyway? In one simple moment@work Jesus answered all of those questions.

Yes, I know you aren't worthy. I want you anyway. And I can provide for you better than you can provide for yourself. It is no wonder that it is at this point that Peter, Andrew, James, and John leave everything to follow Jesus. They had gone into deep water with Jesus and had seen Jesus@work.

I don't know where Christ has called you to serve him in or in what business or profession God is guiding you to. The scriptures show us that Jesus had 500 disciples back then, but only twelve of them quit their jobs to follow him around full time. It makes us wonder what the ratio is today. But if Jesus were calling you to leave everything and go to Bible school or seminary to prepare for the ministry or the mission field, how can you read this account and not go? How can you believe this account and even hesitate? For it is the same God who called Isaiah, and whose Son called Peter, who selects each of us specifically to follow him today.

When we see Jesus at the altar and meet Him at the pulpit, do we listen to Him? DO we hear Him when He invites us to go into deep waters with Him. We may think it's the wrong time to go, or the wrong way to fish, but unless we are willing to meet the direct challenge of His call in our lives then we are not ready. Jesus calls to each of us directly.

In the book Shadow of the Almighty Elizabeth Elliot recounts her struggle with doubt as her husband Jim was preparing to go to South America to reach the Auca Indians for Christ. She asked him one day "Jim, are you sure you are supposed to go?" he replied simply: "I am called."

"So, it was, all right," she later writes "scriptural principles, God-directed circumstances, and Jim's own inward assurance were consonant. I could share in it then; I could happily help him plan."

So far I have observed the **Story** of the call, the **Surprise** of the call and the **Selective** nature of the call. Now I would like to take a few moments to observe the reality and consistency of the call throughout time, I call this the **Strength** of the call.

IV. Strength: The Strength of the Call

Peter and his friends were called to be fishers of men. This was not just a cute metaphor Jesus made up for being an evangelist it was not a bumper sticker slogan. It was a phrase that had a direct messianic impact from Jeremiah 16:15-17 listen to the words of this passage as I read them and know that this passage was well known and well quoted by the Israelites as they yearned for their nation to be restored.

"but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers. "But now I will send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes".

Jesus as the messiah was calling Peter and his friends to be the fulfillment of that prophecy. The reaction of Peter to the miracle of the filled nets in leaving to follow Christ had a history that Peter knew and saw clearly in the Old Testament scriptures. The history of his family's faith and the faith of his people impacted him in his workplace on that day more deeply than he had ever thought it could. He suddenly realized that he had been a fisherman for a reason. That Jesus had come to this town and preached in the synagogue, healed his mother in law and even stepped onto his boat for a reason. To his horror and great delight, Peter on that

day realized that he was one of the fishermen that this passage spoke of, not in clever allusion or hidden meaning, but in reality, he knew what it meant to be called to gather together the scattered people of Israel.

This is a foreshadowing of the Great Commission, when all Christ's followers were given the identity and the mission of being disciple-makers. And so when we come to Christ we too become fishers of men. We are all called to fish, and therefore to learn to fish better.

To neglect the Christian heritage of Bible reading and prayer and public worship with our family of faith is to fail to mend our nets and keep them in good repair. We tear holes in our nets when we walk away from our traditions of faith and mentoring relationships with those who have gone before us. If we stand by our boats and practice the discipline of having the nets ready instead of just going home and leaving our lives in a mess we will fail to catch fish. There are many that fail to obey the command of this passage: "Go into deeper waters and Let down the net"!

When I sat in Dr. Wardle's class I remember deeply considering the spiritual direction that he pointed us to. First and foremost our relationship with God needs to be the place that all ministry flows from. As we heard Dr. Solomon talk about guarding our schedules and Dr. Keefer share his heart for prayer and Dr, McMickle encouraged us to remember John 15:5 where Jesus says "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." I heard the command of Christ just as those fishermen heard it on that day over and over again I heard these men telling us, "go into deep waters, and there drop down your nets".

So often we live in a constant connection with the crowds. Connected by cell phones and email, we rush to meetings and important appointments. However, the deep waters lie away from the shore and Christ promises us a catch there!

We may say, "Lord, the people are over there", but Jesus replies "come with me and I will show you the catch". We may say Jesus it is the wrong time of day and this is the wrong direction, but still Jesus says "come with me into deep water, drop your nets there".

The strength of the call I believe must take us into "deep water time" in each of our lives. Deep water time is time away from the crowds away from distractions in a place where Jesus can have our full attention and change our hearts. A place where we can see Him work and cry out "I am unclean", we are humbled when we see Jesus at work. I am convinced that the strength of the call comes from being in the "deep waters".

Just as Peter called for other boats, I pray that as I go into the deep waters with Jesus and move away from the safety of the shore that I can call out to some of you to help with the great catch of fish! Please have your nets ready, please listen for the cries, please come away from the crowds into the deep waters to help the Disciples as they obey our savior. But the strength of ready nets and deep water fishing is not where this narrative ends. There is one final piece that I want to share with you today and that is the final "S" of the call that I want to share with you:

Step Away.

V. Step Away: The call moves you forward: "The Walk"

When Peter and his boys finally got the fish to the shore, their next move was in one sense amazing, and in another sense seems inevitable. They left everything and followed Jesus. **Imagine this scene.** You've got two boats loaded to the "gills" with the catch left sitting in the sun. Now, I know what the businessmen amongst us are thinking. There's a whole lot of

merchandise with a very short shelf life, and they just leave it? That "stinks." Well, it sounds "fishy" to me too. But before I "spawn" any more fish puns, let me make my point.

They left that "school" of fish to sit at the feet of Jesus. (Repeat)

Imagine the commitment these guys are making at this moment. They have just made the biggest catch of their career. They've got work to do! If you don't think those boats full of fish weren't worth some serious money, you haven't eaten at Red Lobster lately (fishermen were not poor in this culture)!

These men walked away from the great catch, they just walked away, and the scriptures do not say that they ever gave it a second thought.

I doubt the fish actually spoiled. In fact I can see many of the poor and needy that were gathered along that shoreline to see Jesus getting a free dinner from this catch. These men gave it all away and just walked away from it! To follow Jesus. Do you think they made a mistake?

While we are not all called to full-time "vocational" Christian service, we are all called to full-time Christian living and total Christian commitment. If the Lord calls you to the mission field, would you go? What's holding you back? Is it a boatload of smelly old fish. The catch that was made on this day was not as important to these men as what it showed them about the awesome power and ability of Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you believe in His power today?

Do you want the blessings? Or can you leave the blessing to follow Jesus where He goes?

Do you want the blessings? Or do you want to follow Jesus where He goes?

CONCLUSION

Today we have examined Luke 4:1-11 and from this passage have observed five characteristics of the call of Christ that I believe we can find here. These are.

1. **Story** of the call (Back-Story): hearing it throughout my life
2. **Shock** of the call: When Christ takes us in a new direction
3. **Selective** Nature: How the call of Christ is unique yet deafening to each of us
4. **Strength**: The power and ability of God is evidenced in the call
5. **Step** Away: How the call moves us forward and helps us to leave things behind

Charles Spurgeon once said

"Many preachers are good tailors spoiled, and capital shoe makers turned out of their proper calling. When God means a creature to fly, He gives it wings, and when He intends men to preach He gives them abilities."

Oswald Chambers put it this way.

"The call is the inner motive of having been gripped by God - spoiled for every aim in life save that of discipling men to Jesus.

So I ask you today where are you in the call? What is your story? Have you been shocked? Has God selected you for a specific task and do you know that His strength is sufficient to fulfill this task has He taken you to deep waters? Could you step away and leave it all behind just to follow Jesus wherever He leads?

Babe Ruth once said this

"I knew an old minister once...How I envy Him...I am listed as a famous home-runner, yet beside that obscure minister, who was so good and so wise, I never got to first base". (Secrets of Staying Power, Kevin Miller)

Would you leave it all behind if you heard the call? **Let's pray**