



**February 6, 2022**

**Sermon Series**

Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

**This Week's Big Idea**

Encountering the Holy: from Rabbi to Lord

**Introduction:**

*In Mark and Matthew's summation of Jesus' call to Peter, James and John are so compact that we are left to wonder about the fuller story. What led up to this dramatic change of life? Luke's account is short too, but it includes Peter's encounter with the Holy. Using a Jewish literary structure of parallel stanzas that climax in the middle stanza, everything changes for Peter, James, and John with this encounter. They catch a boatload of fish, but are caught for a world-changing venture.*

**Luke 5:1-11 NRSV**

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

**Bible Conversation**

What do you think Peter thought when Jesus told him to "put out into the deeper water and let down your nets for a catch"? (v. 4b) How would you have felt? Peter responds to the incredible catch of fish with a seemingly strange reaction, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." What did Peter mean?

Jesus says to Simon, "Do not be afraid." Then makes a prediction, "from now on you will be catching people." Peter and his partners (James and John) all leave to follow Jesus. To leave their profession would represent a radical decision, especially after hitting the jackpot with an incredible catch. Do you see anything in the text that helps you understand their willingness to do this?

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## Reflection by Pastor Peter Strommen

Jesus' discipleship call to what will be his inner core (Peter, James, and John) is written in a classic Jewish form called a "prophetic rhetorical template." (K. Bailey) Seven stanzas move into the miracle climax in v. 4. The boat goes out and comes in (v. 1 & v. 7) and out again. Jesus talks to Peter (v. 2 & v. 6). Peter replies (v. 3 & v. 5). Over the course of what happens, everything changes!

Notice Peter's change of title for Jesus before and after v. 4 ("Rabbi" to "Lord"). Notice how Jesus calls Peter (and James and John) to follow him by using this earthy (and smelly) setting of their everyday work world to reveal something utterly unnerving, inspiring and life-altering. We do not have an otherworld spirituality at work here, but a spirituality revealed in and through Peter's work and earthly setting. Catching fish is used to teach catching people, even as he is caught. This is incarnation in action.

Peter is a professional who knows this lake, has fished all night with no success doing all the things that give the best chance for a catch. To be directed by a non-professional ("Rabbi") to go out into deep waters in daylight elicits a respectful, but likely sarcastic response. He'll do it "because you say so," but he's not expecting anything! Normally their quarry are caught near the shore, close to springs and streams bringing fresh oxygen and food, and at night.

Shoals of fish are known in Lake Galilee and hitting one would be a rare jackpot. This shoal practically sinks the boat, and Peter motions for his partners James and John. Peter senses that God is in this miracle. Notice Jesus' response, "do not be afraid" - - fear being the common response of mortals to the transcendent world breaking in on them (Mary, Shepherds, Isaiah, etc.). His reaction is to recognize his mere human existence in the blinding light of Holiness. "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Is this one of our reactions to God getting too close for comfort? To me Peter reveals the deep spiritual sensitivity one might expect from a great future leader. Unlike Mary though - - whose consent to God's unknown future is a marvel of faith - - Peter recoils. What is someone like me doing in the presence of this Holy One! Yet, fears aside, they all follow Jesus, leaving behind their business, and a prize catch. They responded to something that touched them far beyond a fisherman's dream of a miracle catch. It's not the catch itself that does this; it's the one who catches them.

## Reflection Conversation

Have you experienced a time in which you felt a call from God, and it led to a change in your life? Do you identify with Peter's initial reaction of not wanting to get too close to God out of a sense of unworthiness or discomfort?

### The 1 Question:

Compared to Peter, how would you describe your spiritual beginning?

From the author of "Zorba the Greek." Growing up, Nikos Kazantzakis was torn between the faith of his mother and the bitterness towards God of his Father. At age 19 he spent some time at a monastery atop a mountain in Greece. There he talked to a wise old monk, Father Makarios. "Father Makarios," he once asked, "do you still wrestle with the devil?" "No," he replied, "I used to, but now I'm old and tired and the devil is old and tired. So, I leave him alone and the devil leaves me alone." "Then life is easy now," says Nikos. "Oh no," replies Father Makarios. "It is much harder now. I wrestle with God." "You wrestle with God and hope to win?" says Nikos. "No, I wrestle with God, and I hope to lose."

## Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we cannot call you only Rabbi, because to encounter you transcends what we may learn. You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and what you give exceeds our capacity to know or understand. May we not fear to enter into the fellowship you offer, the destiny you promise, and the path you will lead. Amen.

## Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Sermon Series: Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

Text: Luke 6:17-26

**1 week.**  
**1 story.**  
**1 message.**

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