



Study #3 for the week of January 16, 2012

Catching Fish!

Luke 5:1-11

Introduction

So much of the Gospel story occurs in and around Galilee. Healings of in-laws and others. Feeding the masses. Walking on water. Calming the storm. Casting demons into swine. Sermons on mounts. Breakfasts on the beach.

And Galilee witnesses the beginnings of ministry, not just for Jesus, but for the disciples he called. It is here that four fishermen, partners in business, get launched into a new career propelled by an overwhelming catch of fish.

So, enter into the story. Experience the miracle of a carpenter who knows more about fishing than do seasoned fishermen. And in the process, hear the call that captured them for a lifetime.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to experience with Peter (and the others) the dramatic, hope-filled call to life-changing gospel ministry**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Tell some “fish tales”. Got any whoppers? What’s been your own experience of fishing?

Read Luke 5:1-11

- (2) This story results in the calling of 4 disciples to follow Jesus (Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John). In the following 1½ chapters there are 2 more specific scenes of disciples/apostles being called (**5:27-32, 6:12-16**), plus several scenes of others being drawn into the healing and restoration of the Kingdom (**5:12-16, 5:17-26, 6:6-11**). Briefly skim the stories.

What do you notice about those called or drawn by Jesus? Any similarities or differences? Would other rabbis have called the same folk?

Are we fit to be called?

- (3) Jesus makes 2 requests of Simon Peter (**v. 3** and **v. 4**). Apparently Simon has no objection to the first, but is reluctant on the second. Why? What’s the difference between the two? What makes the second request harder for Simon?

Are there areas in your own life where you are more reluctant to submit to the Lord’s direction?

- (4) Though reluctant, Simon Peter does, in fact, comply with Jesus’ request. It is an act of both obedience and faith. What prepared him to act in this way?

- (5) A miracle is performed, presumably bigger than any of Simon's own fish-tales! How big was it? (What are the signs?)
- (6) How does Simon Peter respond to the miracle? It seems that seeing Jesus more clearly leads to clearer sight of self, too. Why? Have you ever seen this dynamic at work in your own circumstance?
- (7) This story functions as an acted-parable. It's a real event, but Jesus has intentionally set it up – it's packed with meaning. What is the meaning? How does it tie into the calling (**v. 10**)?

What ongoing impact would this event have had on Peter's future ministry and calling?

- (8) We, too, have been given the calling to fish for people (see **Matthew 28:18-20**). Think about the "ponds" in which you (and we, as a church) are called to fish. How often does the prospect of a "catch" seem unrealistic? How often have you (we) fished all night without any success?

How can we enter into the realized optimism of this fishing story? What practical lessons can we apply?

Prayer

Pray for our "fishing ponds". Pray for the Lord to grant success.

For Reflection

A scrap of ancient text ...

I raised my eyes, tentatively, furtively, my confession still hanging in the air. His eyes captured mine. Accepting. Welcoming. Yet shaking foundations. “Don’t be afraid,” he said.

Why had fear been my gut response? Oh, there was marvel. But fear was more basic.

His question earlier hadn’t jarred at all. “Can I sit in your boat? To teach?” Sure. So the crowds gathered, men and women pressing forward at the shore like fish drawn up in a net.

Finished, dismissing the crowds, he said to me, “Simon, it’s time to fish. Head out, into the deep, put down your nets for a catch.”

A catch? There’d been nothing all night! I told him so, thinking, almost out loud, what any fisherman would know, that if you don’t catch anything in the cool of the night, you sure won’t catch anything in the heat of the day. Disgruntled, but unspoken. “Nevertheless, Master, simply because you say so, I’ll do it.” Responsibility his.

Out we went, painful with those clean and mended nets. Out they went into the cool deep. Immediately, they grew taut, weighted down. “Great!,” I thought, “snagged!” I pulled and they gave – not snagged, but weighty. Hand over hand they came. “Andrew,” I shouted, “give me some help.” My brother rose from his place of cynical amusement, his hand, feeling the weight, making him urgent. On came the net, a stray fish or two dropping into the boat. And then all across the surface of that deep – churning, shimmering – were fins and tails and scales – fish! Spilling uncontrollably into the boat, slipping, crashing, flopping one over another.

“James! John!,” I hollered toward the shore, “Get out here quick!” Our partners, heaving at the oars, bobbed up next to us, only to be swamped themselves with fish upon fish, both boats sinking dangerously low in the quiet waves.

I looked at fish and Master, fell to my knees in slime and scale, and made my confession. “Get away from me, Lord – I’m a sinful man.” Eyes that could see through those murky depths to untapped shoals of fish, must be seeing right through me, right then, right there. Fear shot through me with the exposure. How could I even share the same boat?

It was then his eyes caught mine anew, like burning coals to unclean lips, saying, “Don’t be afraid – from now on you’ll be catching people.”

He ran roughshod over fear, calling me to partnership in his boat, not mine. At that new beginning he made his point clear. He knew exactly what he was doing – no mistaking it. “I know where the fish are,” he was telling me. More pointedly, “I know how to get fish and net connected.”

It was true then and it’s true now. Down in Jerusalem. Up in Judea and Samaria. And, yes, in every end of the earth where the Master commands nets dropped into the deep. It’s the Master who knows. Now full nets only happen with eyes on him.

