

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday After Epiphany, January 10, 2016

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 421, 192:6, 270, 422, 461:4-5.

Lessons: Exodus 3:1-12, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, John 1:35-51.

Sermon Text: Luke 5:1-11

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

For most of us, it would take a pretty powerful calling to take us away from our comfortable life. If you are looking for a different profession, you wouldn't just drop everything and go, would you?

But today we hear Jesus, God's Son, inviting men to follow him. Let us see today how these fishermen and we can have confidence in him when we follow him. Jesus assures us in Matthew chapter 6: ***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, drink, clothing and shelter] shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”*** (Matthew 6:33-34 KJV)

Today we hear

HOW JESUS CALLS PETER, ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN

- 1. It is a simple invitation.**
- 2. They were invited to make a drastic commitment.**

Notice how simply Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John as his first disciples. It is a simple calling. Jesus says ***“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*** (Mark 1:17)

No one will follow Jesus without an invitation of some kind. Have you invited anyone to follow Jesus lately? Have you invited anyone to come and hear about Jesus lately? Right now we are in the Epiphany season, the season of the church year which especially emphasizes that Jesus came for Gentiles, too. But no one will come to Jesus without an invitation and hearing the Word of God, as Paul writes in Romans: ***“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*** (Romans 10:17 KJV)

These men knew who Jesus was, for Matthew tells us just before he records this event that Jesus had been preaching the Gospel of repentance in this very area. In our Gospel lesson you heard how they were introduced to Jesus.

Notice how quickly, completely, drastically and radically they left their old life.

It is the Word of God that calls them. Jesus is personally speaking to them, but note that it is still the Word of God that calls them. It is not an emotional experience that brings them to faith in God but hearing God's Word.

These men were fishermen, not learned rabbis, or teachers of the Law or scholars learned in the Old Testament and the human teachings of the rabbis. As we learn more about them through the rest of the New Testament, we realize that they did know much about the Scriptures, which was for them the Old Testament, for the New Testament books had not yet been written. But they were plain ordinary men, although they were now men to whom Jesus gives an important calling as well as the wisdom and power to fulfill that calling.

Our sermon text from Luke gives us more background than do Matthew and Mark. We must be careful not to jump to conclusions and think that the Gospels contradict one another. For ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*** (2 Timothy 3:16 KJV)

Luke begins this history very simply: ***“one day”***.

Listen to what we also hear from the other evangelists: ***“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”*** (Matthew 4:18-22 NIV)

Mark tells us: ***“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.”*** (Mark 1:14-20 NIV)

Many people in the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee had heard of Jesus or even heard him preach or maybe even known someone who had been miraculously healed by Jesus. So he climbs in a boat and asks Simon, that is, Simon Peter, to push out away from the shore. He is then teaching the people from the boat. If you’ve spent any time near a lake, you know how sound can carry over the water when it is calm. This lake was not always stormy, although there are several biblical narratives when it is rough and stormy.

Then, ***“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’”*** Jesus has a lesson to teach Peter.

Listen to Simon’s answer and his grudging ***“OK, I’ll do it.”*** ***“Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”*** He wasn’t anxious to fish in the deep water and thought that he, an experienced fisherman, knew better than Jesus. But look at what happens!

“When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” These were professional fishermen, who would have kept their nets in good condition and not allowed them to become weak or damaged so that just a reasonable amount of fish would have broken them. Their nets probably would have been large nets with weights attached to the bottom edges. Some of these kinds of nets were about 15 feet in diameter. After throwing them into the water, they would have pulled on a rope to draw the bottom edges together and trap the fish.

‘So 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.’ Wow! What a catch! So many fish that both boats ***“began to sink.”*** They see first-hand that the Lord can certainly provide abundantly.

Look at Simon Peter’s reaction: ***“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”***

Luke now, for the first time, speaks of him as “Simon Peter”. Peter brashly says ‘because I am a sinner, a most wicked man for not believing you, you shouldn’t have anything to do with me.’

What a remarkable confession! Before the Lord, in the presence of the Lord, he confesses his sinfulness and you can be sure he wasn’t just thinking only about what had just happened, but really about all of his life. We might be reminded of Saint Paul who persecuted Christians before Christ called him to serve and actually stood by while Jews stoned Stephen to death ***“giving approval to his death.”*** (Acts 8:1 NIV) Yet God called him to serve.

Jesus tells Peter ‘don’t be afraid’. You will catch men. ***“For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and 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.’”***

Jesus doesn’t shame Peter. Luke records that Jesus tells him he will catch men, not using fishermen’s nets, but using the Word of God.

Notice their reaction. ***“So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”*** “At once” Peter and his brother Andrew followed Jesus. John and James, their fishing partners, too, were called to

follow Jesus and, ***“they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”*** We might wonder how their father felt. We are not told about that. But Jesus says later in Matthew’s Gospel: ***“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;”*** (Matthew 10:37 NIV)

James and John, too, left their boats and their father. Mark tells us that they left their father with the hired men. That tells us something about serving Jesus. It is not just a “job” in which one is hired only for pay. It is a calling, and the church today continues that Scripture doctrine of not just “hiring” and “firing” our called servants of the Word. We must add here that Paul in his letters makes it clear that those who have received a Divine Call to serve God are deserving of being paid for their work. But they dare never go into that work with the goal of just receiving pay or getting rich. In our Epistle lesson you heard how God doesn’t want men who are serving only as lovers of money, or for dishonest gain. The King James Version twice warns that those who serve must not be ***“greedy of filthy lucre.”*** (1 Timothy 3:3 and 8)

These working men, fishermen, were called to serve Jesus. What about us?

You may not consider yourself especially learned in the Holy Scriptures. But you have learned and are learning God’s will – Law and Gospel. You have learned this especially from the Holy Scriptures, and other sources which are drawn from the Bible: from Luther’s Small catechism, in Sunday School, and here in church and Bible Class and at home. It is my opinion that you likely know more than many preachers knew in Luther’s day. Many of them came from the Roman Catholic Church and didn’t know the Scriptures well. They were part of the audience for whom the Large Catechism was written. And much of what you read as you study Luther’s Large Catechism is what you’ve already learned and know!

These men continued to learn from Jesus. After Jesus called them to follow him Matthew records that ***“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.”*** (Matthew 4:23-25) These men whom he called in our text were then with him for nearly three years, until his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

May we learn from these men to trust Jesus, to follow when and where he leads us, and to be his witnesses. Amen.