

Sermon February 9, 2025 Luke 5:1-11

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 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. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 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." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!

In today's lesson, Jesus is fishing from Simon Peter's boat on the Sea of Galilee. He isn't using worms on hooks, fancy flies, minnows, cut bait, artificial lures, or sonar. He doesn't cherry-pick for the most receptive ears or the best waters. Instead, Jesus simply casts out the net. Like the Sower who goes out to sow his seed, He simply casts the seed of the Word of God out like a fishing net. And in that Word is great power.

The net is the Word of God's salvation. It yanks us out of our sinfulness and death and into life won for us by Christ. The Lord's Word pulls sinners out of the depths of darkness and into the holy ark of the Christian church. The Lord casts out the net of His Word and saves you and brings you in from the waters of death to the streams of life.

Peter had a frustrating and fruitless night. Empty nets cast out; and empty nets dragged back in. After Jesus had finished preaching, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Peter was like, "If we haven't caught anything all night, then why in the world would we catch anything now?" But against everything he knows as a fisherman, Peter gives Jesus' advice a try. He says, "But at Your Word I will let down the nets."

"But at Your Word" would be a wonderful motto for our lives. For those struggling with grief and immense sadness, "but at Your Word" enables them to continue to cry out to the Lord for help trusting that He will hear. For those pained with disappointments in life, "but at Your Word" enables them to remain confident that nothing can separate them from Christ's love. For those anxious and worried, "but at Your Word" enables them to know that all things are in God's hands who provides for every care. For those struck by the seeming chaos and heartbreak of the moral decay all around us and a world out of control "but at Your Word" enables them to know that God rules over all things for the good of His people. This is the way for us to live by the Word of God.

Simon Peter gets a personal encounter with the Word of God, and it makes him scared for his life. After a night of empty nets, Peter might well have fretted about the lack of fish, the empty wallet, the bills to be paid, and the mouths to feed. But now that he's got a fisherman's dream - a huge catch that nearly sinks two boats. Yet Peter doesn't

thank Jesus for the miraculous catch. Instead, he begs Him, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Peter recognizes the power of God’s Word and that he is in the presence of the holy God, just like Isaiah was in the Old Testament reading, when God drew Isaiah up into the realm of heaven. “Do not be afraid,” Jesus says. That is the summary of the Gospel. That is divine pardon and full forgiveness.

“Don’t be afraid,” Jesus says to you. “I’m not here to judge you, but to be caught under God’s wrath for you. I’m here to drown in your place as I suffocate on the cross for you. Don’t be afraid. I don’t practice catch and release. I caught you. I found you. And I will not throw you back into the depths of sin or abandon you to the grave. You are mine. I forgive you. I restore you to harmony with the Father and keep you in the holy ark of the Christian church.”

This is what happens to us. Jesus catches us in the net of His Word. But we look around today and think the net didn’t catch much . . . or the net is tearing from the strain of our hard-hearted world, and our sins and fears and doubts overwhelm us. If such is the case, then we can see that what happened to Peter is a positive, uplifting thing because God gives the increase. In the face of God’s abundant gifts, we too with Peter and Isaiah cannot but fall down and confess, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

And how does Jesus respond? He responds in the same way He did to Peter. He absolves you and says, “Do not be afraid.” God touched Isaiah’s corrupted tongue with a coal from the fire on His heavenly altar and made him clean. Here He touches our lives with bread and wine from His altar and says, “Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” With this blessing and absolution, He sends you out to your daily

tasks to live, in the words of Peter, “but by Your Word”; to follow where He leads through life.

We can go and live life unafraid. We can put out into the deep and know that the work and results are God’s, and that life is anything but routine or meaningless when the Lord our God is abounding in steadfast love. The Lord cares for you. He eagerly answers you in time of need and graciously showers you with all good things, and says to you, “Do not be afraid.” That, after all, is what happens and what it is like to be caught in the fishing net of God’s Word. Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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Special thanks to the Lutheran Church in Canada for material for this sermon. Join us for worship on our Facebook page [ChristLutheranChurchFH](#). There you can view our 10 am Sunday service at your convenience.