

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 5:1-11
July 1st, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

From Now on You Will Catch Men

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Today's reading completes the cycle of the last four Sundays, which talked about God's love for us, and it also wraps up the cycle of the last two Sundays which talked about grace and mercy. Today our Lord tells us about the peace which His grace and mercy ultimately gives to our troubled souls. For the greatest thing in our life that destroys peace within our souls is the struggle with sin, and its consequences in the world, like sickness and death. And when we struggle with these things we are lead into prayer; we come before God pleading for His grace and mercy—for peace.

However, the blessing of God never seems to come when we want it. And God's answer to our prayers never seems to come when we need it. For we cry out to the Lord especially in our hour of need. And we pray most earnestly and most fervently when we are in crisis. And just at that moment, we are sure God is not listening; and that His blessing will not come right then and right there. For if we were sure, then we would not need to pray or ask or beg. But because we need to remember that God does listen, does do for us, and does bless us even when we cannot see it, even when we are desperate—that is why we pray.

But you must now hear and know this: God's grace and mercy precedes your prayer. God's blessing comes even before we pray. God's love, God's compassion, God's kindness overshadows us and surrounds us even before we even know we are in a crisis; even before we think to pray. That is true of us, and that was true of the disciples.

They were fishermen and had *"toiled all night and caught nothing."* No doubt, they were frustrated beyond measure. For this is how they made money. And now, after a long hard night, they had nothing to show for it. So they gave up, brought their boats in, and let our Lord + Jesus borrow them so He could preach. He *"got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat."*

Now, we do not know exactly what our Lord + Jesus said when He preached to this crowd. But we do know this *"when He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.'"*

Now think about this for a moment. These fishermen—Sts. Peter, James, and John—they had spent all night fishing. They were frustrated and exhausted. They were in no mood to mess around again. But our Lord + Jesus says, “Go now—and let down your nets for a catch.” So they did.

I tell you, the grace and mercy of God does not work the way we want it to; and at the time we think it should; and according to our ideas of justice and smarts. The grace and mercy of God bends the rules—the rules of God’s exactness. And the grace and mercy of God relaxes the strict demands of His commandments and gives us peace. All so that He might bring us into His kingdom, so that He might feed us with a food that surpasses our understanding, a food that gives greater peace than we ever hoped for, and a food that truly does strengthen us not only now, but even through death and into the world to come.

Food is how our Lord + Jesus gives His peace; food for the body, but most of all, food for the soul. And the food for the soul is not just a word that soothes, or a blessing that calms. The food for the soul—the food that truly nourishes and strengthens us—is the food of our Lord + Jesus’ holy Body and His precious Blood. This food our Lord gives us by His own hand, at His own invitation, at this very altar. He wraps His Body in bread and conceals His Blood in wine. And then says, “Here, eat it and drink it. This is My peace—the peace you prayed for, the blessing you really need—My love that really will settle and soothe you. In this bread which I bless, and this wine which I give—there you receive everything I am, everything I have, everything I give. For that food is not a picture or idea of what could be. This food—this holy blessed Sacrament—this is My Body and My Blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sins.”

Food is the core of our Lord’s peace. So after preaching, our Lord gives peace to those tired, irritated fishermen by telling them to catch food after they had toiled all night and came up empty-handed.

And by the grace of the Holy Ghost, St. Peter, called Simon, and the others believed our Lord + Jesus. They heard His outlandish command, and they did it. They did not fight or resist or walk away. They said what every Christian should say: “*Nevertheless at Your word*’ I will do what You say.”

Were they blessed? Beyond measure. And was it because they believed? Yes. But more so, it was because our Lord + Jesus is gracious and merciful. For they have believed before—believed that fish would be caught. But now, our Blessed Lord is gracious and merciful to them in a way they did not imagine, and when they least expected it. So gracious and merciful was He that “*they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking*” so they had to get another boat, and then “*filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.*”

This is how our heavenly Father is with His grace and mercy. He does not skimp. He does not give us just enough to get by. He overwhelms us with His kindness. He is abundant in His blessing. He is overflowing with His gifts. He gives more than we know what to do with, more than we need, and more than enough.

And then it hits us—that we really do not deserve any of our Lord’s grace and mercy. That we are unworthy of any smile, any kindly gesture, any lively word, any compassion that our Lord + Jesus shows or gives. For we do not treat each other like our Lord + Jesus treats us. And we often grumble and complain instead of trusting and receiving whatever He gives. We always want more and different, instead of receiving with thanksgiving whatever our Lord chooses to give. And we even sometimes curse what our Lord gives us, what He calls our blessing.

When that happens—when it hits us that we are unworthy of our Lord’s mercy and grace—then we should imitate St. Peter. For when St. Peter saw the catch of fish, he *“fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’”*

Was he afraid? Yes. But St. Peter also knew his place—that he rightfully should not be in the Lord’s presence, and in the Lord’s kingdom; and that the Lord + Jesus had every right to walk away, every right to lash out against him because of his little faith and his griping and complaining the night before.

But, just as St. Peter’s knees hit the ground, there is the Lord surprising him once more with His grace and mercy. For the Lord + Jesus does not say, “You’re right, Peter. You do deserve nothing.” Instead, He kindly and gently says, *“Do not be afraid.”* (Which is to say, ‘Peace be with you.’ For with His mercy, there is nothing to fear.) And our Lord says, “I did not do this miracle so that you may be afraid of Me. Rather, I blessed you and had mercy on you so that you might all the more believe Me—and believe in Me. So *‘do not be afraid.’* Instead, stand tall. For the God of Heaven and Earth has had mercy on you, forgives you everything, and gives you His kingdom. And moreover, just for you Peter and you other fishermen, I give you another mercy, another blessing: *“from now on you will catch men.”*

That is how it is with the Lord’s grace and mercy. It just never stops. It continually surprises us. It goes more deeply than we can imagine; more deeply than we ever dared to hope; more deeply than any sin we’ve ever committed, or any fear we have ever known. And this Lord’s mercy then also transforms us—from what we were and what we thought was most important, into what our Lord says is good and right and best, and we find peace and comfort in Him, and rest for our sin-troubled souls.

It is no accident that this entire story happens over water. For that is where we first meet our Lord’s grace and mercy, and where we are first given eternal peace—in the waters of Holy Baptism, where we are transformed to be children of the Heavenly Father. And it is no accident that this entire story is about food. For, that is how our Lord continues to give His grace, mercy and peace to us—at this holy altar, where Christ + Jesus feeds us with Himself. And it is no accident that this story climaxes with the Lord saying, *“Do not be afraid.”* For that is what He says to us in Holy Absolution, and which proclaims to us that we have peace with God. It is also no accident that he tells St. Peter that he would catch men from now on, for through the preaching of the Word of God, men’s souls are drawn into the net of the Church and are brought into the boat—the ark of holy Christendom—so that they may be brought to the eternal shores of Heaven.

Let us then take this to heart, and live from this grace, mercy and peace that our Lord + Jesus gives—for to Him, with His Father and the Holy Ghost, belongs all glory, honor and worship. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!