

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday

St. Luke 5:1-11

July 21st, 2019

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Forsook All and Followed Him

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 Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, You gave us Your holy Word and have generously provided for all our bodily needs. We are unworthy of all these mercies and have rather deserved punishment. But forgive us our sins as You forgave Peter, and prosper and bless us in our different callings that by Your strength we may be sustained and defended, now and forever and so praise and glorify You eternally; You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

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

Today we see just how powerful the preaching of the Lord + Jesus Christ is. The crowds flocked to Him. The crowds were so great that they pressed about Him to hear Him. He could not preach on the shore because of the amount of people who had come out to hear Him. So, He had to get into a boat and set out a little from the shore in order to preach the repentance of sins toward the forgiveness of sins. The crowds coming to hear our Lord's preaching is the first sign of the efficacy of the Word; that what the Lord intends for the Word to do, it will accomplish.

The crowds came to the Lord + Jesus because He spoke as One Who had authority and not like the scribes and Pharisees. His preaching cut them to the heart, and they wanted to hear more. Couple this with the healing miracles that He did, and we can begin to understand why the crowds came and pressed against Him so, in order that they might hear Him speak.

The Lord's Word—His preaching—is certainly efficacious; it does what He intends it to do. Just as He promised in the Prophet Isaiah that His Word would not return to Him void. It shall accomplish what He sent it to do. However, we cannot see the effect of the Lord's Word on the hearts of mankind. We cannot look into a man's heart and see what is going on in there. We have trouble sometimes looking into our own hearts and digesting what is going on in there, let alone having to look inside someone else's heart to see if the Lord's Word is working on it.

So then, our Lord + Jesus after He had finished preaching gives us, and the Apostles who were manning the fishing boats a physical representation of how efficacious His preaching and Word is. He tells St. Peter, whose boat He was in, to put out to sea to catch fish. But our Lord does not just tell St. Peter to go fishing. That can be lost on us, and those who are unfamiliar with fishing, if we do not consider our Lord's words to St. Peter. The Lord + Jesus tells St. Peter to go out into the deep part of the sea—this being the sea of Gennesaret, sometimes called the Sea of Tiberias, or more commonly, the Sea of Galilee—to catch fish. Logic would dictate that this was the first thing wrong with our Lord's

command to St. Peter. One does not go to the deep waters to fish for fresh water fish. One remains close to the shore where the schools of fish gather to feed. So, this instruction of our Lord, to a seasoned fisherman like St. Peter would seem at the very least odd.

The second thing that is odd about our Lord's invitation to St. Peter is gleaned from the words of St. Peter himself. *"We have toiled all night."* This is midday, when the heat of the sun makes fishing difficult, if not impossible. This is why St. Peter, and Sts. James and John and the rest, were fishing at night. Because that was the best chance to catch fish. Our Lord + Jesus tells these experienced fishermen two things that would sound strange to them: fish in the middle of the day, and fish in the deep waters.

Well, what does St. Peter say to these strange instructions? He says what anyone would say who had been listening to the Lord's preaching would say: *"At your Word I will let down the nets."* It is a statement of faith; a statement that declares He believes what the Lord had preached. This is the first sign that the pure preaching of the Word of God has an effect on those who listen to it. The crowds believed the preaching of the Lord, and so they flocked to Him. St. Peter believed the preaching of the Lord + Jesus and so, even though it sounded strange, he was willing to do what the Lord + Jesus said. For, St. Peter, like the crowds, believed this man to be at the very least a great prophet.

The fishermen did what the Lord + Jesus requested, and the catch of fish was so great that their nets were breaking, and they had to call the other boat over to obtain the large catch of fish, and in so doing both boats began to sink. In this, we see a physical representation of the preaching of the Lord + Jesus. Since we are unable to look into a man's heart and see the effect of the Word of God on it. And, since St. Peter and the other Apostles are also not able to see what the preaching of the Gospel can do, our Lord + Jesus gives them a sign of how efficacious His preaching truly is. At His Word many fish are caught, so that the net breaks, and the boats sink.

This is the promise that we, as the Church, have when we faithfully preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. The Lord + Jesus will use His Word as He sees fit to bring men into contrition and sorrow over their sins, so that in faith they will look away from their dead works, to the Living Lord + Jesus Who fulfilled the Law on their behalf, and Who took upon Himself the punishment we deserved on the tree of the holy cross. The Church has this promise from the Lord + Jesus for those who remain faithful to the task He has given them, and do look to gimmicks and tricks to try to sell the gospel to people.

This promise is given to the Church, through the promise made to St. Peter. From now on he would be a fisher of men. In the same way that he caught an over abundance of fish at the Lord's Word, he would catch an over abundance of men who would turn from their sin and their good works, and cling to the Lord + Jesus Whom he preached in faith. The people he would preach to would cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for them.

This same preaching is continued today, when the called ministers of Christ call sinners to repentance through the preaching of the Word of the Lord. When the called and ordained ministers of the Lord preach to men that there is no salvation in their works, that God does threaten to punish all those who break His commandments, and that the only means of salvation is in the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus Christ that He accomplished in His fulfillment of the Law and His atonement for our sins on the tree of the holy cross, then those who hear that Word of God are converted by the work of the Holy Ghost. Their hearts of stone are turned into hearts of flesh, and they cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. We cannot see this happening in the hearts of mankind. We cannot see the effects of the preaching. We only have the promise that what our Lord commanded us to do, will be fulfilled. Just like it did for St. Peter, who let down his nets at the Word of the Lord.

St. Peter was given a physical sign of what the Lord's preaching would do with the great catch of fish. We have this same sign recorded in the Evangelist St. Luke for the same reason; that we may see that the Lord's Word does accomplish what He promised it would do. St. Peter and the other Apostles, having seen the effect of the Lord's preaching, forsook all and followed Him. They left their boats, the great catch of fish, which Zebedee, the father of Sts. James and John probably received to his benefit, all their nets and tackle, their families and friends, and followed Him. They followed Him to not only hear more of His preaching, but also to be trained by the Lord + Jesus to become great preachers of the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

It is easy to become discouraged when we see the small number of worshipers gathered together in this place. We become discouraged because the devil wants us to be discouraged. He wants us to be looking at other ways and means—gimmicks and tricks—that were not given to us, the Church, to use. The devil wants us to make the Church look more like the worship of the world and false idol worshipers. Satan wants us to trust in our own striving and doing, and not in the promises of the Lord + Jesus Christ.

Our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, gave us His promises—His works of salvation accomplished for us—so that we might catch men through the pure preaching of those promises, and He gave us the Blessed Sacraments, in order that using them according to Christ's institution and through His Word the Holy Ghost might create and sustain faith in all those who hear and cling to the promises of the Lord + Jesus. Let us unstop our ears, and silently receive our Lord's preaching, for through it He will gladden our sad hearts; He will lighten our dark fears, and He will enlighten our souls with the joy of the salvation that He accomplished for us on the tree of the holy cross.

He began this good work in you, when He lifted you out of the waters of sin and death through Holy Baptism, and brought you into the boat—the ark—of the holy Church. He has caught you out of death, into life. Just as He promised St. Peter that He would catch men alive. May the Lord continue to work on our hearts of stone, that we may have hearts of flesh eager to hear His preaching and His promises. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, without whose aid and blessing all our labors are in vain, regard, we beseech Thee, Thy goodness and our need, and bless us, that in Thy name and with firm trust in Thee we may patiently and cheerfully labor in our calling, honor Thy Word, and evermore praise Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!