

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday

St. Luke 5:1-11

July 17th, 2022

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Pawleys Island, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Multitude Pressed About 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:

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 Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

We learn a little about how fishing was done in the time of our Lord + Jesus from this Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. The Evangelist tells us that there were two boats on the shore, one of which our Lord entered into, from which He preached on account of the multitudes of crowds that gathered to hear His preaching. The crowds were so great that they “pressed against Him.” The multitude pressed about Him so much that He had no more room in which to stand without getting into the boat. These boats belonged to fishermen, with whom we are quite familiar. Sts. Peter, James, John, and Andrew were in the fishing business together. We are also told in another place in holy Scripture that the father of Sts. James and John, Zebedee, was also a fisherman; it was the family business.

These fishermen from the Gospel of St. Luke teach us a little about fishing. The fishermen were cleaning their nets while our Lord was preaching. What this tells us is that they had finished their work of fishing. It was the morning, which means they had been fishing at night. In fact, St. Peter says as much when the Lord + Jesus asked him to put out to catch fish. They had toiled all night and caught nothing. So, the first thing we learn about fishing is it was done at night. We also learn that fishing does not always produce fruit. They had toiled all night and “caught nothing.” It was much like my fishing.

Fishing at that time was done with nets, not rods and reels as it is done today. This means that fishing had to be done near the shoreline, so that they could drag the bottom of Lake Gennesaret and catch into their nets the fish that would be there. The fact that St. Peter confesses that they caught no fish, and yet they were cleaning their nets, gives us an indication of what they caught. They were probably cleaning their nets of all the weeds they had caught. Again, it was much like my own fishing.

So, these experienced fishermen fished at night along the shoreline with nets. They toiled all night, and caught nothing. This is what we learn about fishing from Sts. Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Our Lord + Jesus also teaches us something about fishing. He tells St. Peter, whose boat He

was in, to head out to the deep waters, in the middle of the day, after they had just finished their work, and cleaned all their nets, and to let down their nets where they would not normally fish. In short, this was not how fishing was done. These were experienced fishermen. They had grown up with it. They had learned the trade from their father (at least Sts. James and John did). St. Peter's response to our Lord reveals his confusion at the Lord's request. It also shows faith.

St. Peter, and the others, had to have been listening to our Lord as the crowds were pressing against Him. They had to have been listening while they cleaned their nets, and while the Lord preached from their boat. Through the Lord's preaching, they believed what He had to say, and believed in Him. Therefore, they were willing to do what the Lord commanded them, even when in their minds it would do no good; it would be wasted work for men who were already tired from a full night of fishing. "Nevertheless, at Your Word, I will let down the net."

We all know what happened next from the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Luke. In the place where no fish should have been, they caught so many fish that they had to signal the other boat to come and help them, because their net was breaking. It would seem that our Lord knows a little about fishing, too.

St. Peter recognizes that such a draught of fish was the Lord's doing. This was a gift of the Lord God. It was the Lord God Who had done the work. He was not worthy of such a haul of fish, because he was a sinful man. He understood that a sinner was not worthy of the Lord's gifts. Our Lord + Jesus knows the man's sin, hears his confession, and absolves him of his sin. The catch of fish was a sign of the absolution, that is, forgiveness of St. Peter's sins.

Therefore, my dear friends, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, also teaches us about fishing. But as He tells St. Peter, He is a teacher of fishing for men. The Apostles would be fishers of men. We, the Church, are fishers of men. What we learn from the Lord + Jesus about fishing for men, is that the ways of man are not to be used or trusted. We are to use the means that the Lord gives to us. Even when these means do not seem to make sense to us that they are going to work. The Church—we—are to be like St. Peter who having heard the Lord's command about how to fish, we simply say, "nevertheless at Your command we will let down the nets."

What are the means by which our Lord would have us catch men? What has our Lord commanded us to do in order to catch men? He has handed down to us the same means which He gave to the Apostles. He gave them the gifts of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He gave them the Absolution, by which they, and we, forgive men. He gave them His holy Word to preach to all men; to the crowds who pressed against them. All of these gifts give the forgiveness of sins, which our Lord + Jesus won for us on the tree of the holy cross. He gave these gifts to us so that we might become fishers of men. He has given us the means, and given us the place in which we are to fish for men. These are the means of His grace and love.

Sts. Peter, James, John, and Andrew caught a great catch of fish that day on Lake Gennesaret by the Lord's command. The multitudes pressed about our Lord in order to hear His preaching. The crowds and the waters were teeming with fish. They were ready to hear and believe, just like St. Peter did. Many of the people who followed Him to hear His preaching would eventually forsake Him, because His preaching preached things that were too difficult for them to hear. This world, and society, that we live in also finds the preaching of the Lord + Jesus, done through His faithful ministers preaching the pure Gospel, difficult to hear and believe. The Holy Ghost works where and when He pleases. He provides the fish. He gifts to us the men who come into this holy house and hear the words that our Lord would have preached to all men.

It may not always, or rarely be, a great haul in which the nets are breaking, and we need to call other boats over to help with the catch. But our Lord has given us command to go and fish for men. He

will give to us the fish. We will catch whoever He gives us to catch. He has, however, promised that He will always be with us. He has promised that the harvest is great, and that we should pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers into the field. The need for fishers of men is great in our midst. The need for men who would use the pure preaching of the Word of God, and the administration of the Lord's sacraments according to His command is great. This need for laborers and fishermen—for preachers and ministers—is a sign of our Lord's love for us and all mankind.

Indeed, my dear friends, the theme of the Lord's love runs throughout all the Propers for this day. His love is extended willingly to all those who cry to Him for help. We cry to Him daily to help us with our sin. We cry to Him to daily forgive us of our sins, so that we who are sinful men, just like St. Peter, may receive the absolution from Him. Our Lord + Jesus draws near to us in our humble and contrite confession of our sins; He draws near to us in our repentance, and forgives us all of our sins. He does this through the means by which He has given to us: through the preaching of the Word, Holy Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Absolution, and the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers, that is, whenever two or three gather in His Name, He is there forgiving us of all our sins through His precious means of grace, which show us His love.

He has heard our cry for forgiveness—for help—and He has given us instructions on how to fish. We are to head to the deep waters, and let down our nets. We are to do what seems contrary to all logic and reason of man when it comes to fishing. The fishing of the Lord is not like the fishing of mankind. His means catch fish. The means of mankind catch nothing. Even when such means seem to draw all sorts of men into their midst, they have not really caught anything, for they have not changed men's hearts; they have not led them into repentance so that they might receive forgiveness through the means of grace.

May we ever remain faithful to our Lord's command, and follow His instructions on fishing. And may He ever great to us a great catch of fish, even when we are unable to see that catch with our own eyes. He is the One Who gifts the catch of fish to us. In His grace and love, He calls all sinful men to Himself, to receive His good gifts. May we receive these good gifts with humble thanksgiving. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee 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!