

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 5:1-11
June 30th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Henceforth Thou Shalt Catch Men

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, ‘Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.”

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.

My dear friends, our Lord shows us the peace which His grace and mercy ultimately gives to our troubled souls. When our Lord declares peace to us, He is simply forgiving us our sins. When I tell you “God’s peace be with you,” I am simply declaring God’s forgiveness for you. The same is when we say to one another, “Peace be with you.” We are declaring that we are forgiven by God of our sins on account of the work of Christ. For the greatest thing in our life that destroys peace within our souls is the struggle with sin, and its consequences, like sickness and death. And when we struggle with these things we are led into prayer for sin leads us into fear and trepidation. But, even in this fear, on account of our faith, we know to Whom we can turn to receive relief from our fear. Therefore, we come before God pleading for His grace and mercy—for peace from the fear of our sin and the consequences of sin around us that have laid waste to our lives.

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 that He would answer us, 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 our 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 all of us. And that was true of the disciples in today's Gospel.

They were fishermen, and had "toiled all night, and took nothing." No doubt, they were frustrated beyond measure. For this is how they made their living; how they fed and clothed themselves and their families. 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 "entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, ... and He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat."

Now, we do not know exactly what our Lord + Jesus said when He preached to this crowd. But we do know this—He spoke about God's grace, mercy and peace. For He spoke as His Apostles would speak, and as His Ministers today continue to speak. He spoke about our Father's kindness for us, which we do not deserve, and which we are unworthy to receive. From that fishing boat, our Lord + Jesus preached about God's blessing, which exceeds our imagination. And He spoke about His compassion which goes deeper than any need we now know, and deeper than any hurt we now feel. And our Lord + Jesus preached about the safety, the security, and the comfort that God the Father gives us by the Holy Ghost in the Kingdom of God. And He preached about the peace, which surpasses all understanding, which guards and protects all God's people by His grace. All these things He preached. And "when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, 'Put out out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.'"

Now think about this for a moment. These fishermen—Sts. Peter, James, and John, and St. Andrew (St. Peter's brother)—had spent all night fishing. They were frustrated and exhausted. They were in no mood to mess around again—especially at the wrong time of day and in the wrong place in the water. For every fisherman knows that fish are best caught in the evening or at night, or the very early morning, when it is still dark out and cool; And that fish are best caught in the shallow water along the shoreline where the weeds grow thickest. But our Lord + Jesus says, "Go now, in the middle of the day, while it is hot. And go to the place where the sun beats the hottest—the middle of the lake. And go to the water that is deepest—where the fish have plenty of room to run and hide. Go there, and go now—and let down your nets for a draught."

I tell you, my dear friends; the grace and mercy of God does not work the way we expect it to; and at the time we think it should; and according to our ideas of justice and knowledge. The grace and mercy of God looks past the rules—the rules of God's exactness. And the grace and mercy of God sees the works and merits of the Christ, 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 life to come.

Food is how our Lord + Jesus gives His peace; food for the body, yes, 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, take and eat, and drink ye all 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 peace, our Lord gives peace to those

tired, irritated fishermen by telling them to catch food—in the wrong place, and at the wrong time.

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: “But at Thy word I will do what Thou hast said.”

Were they blessed? Beyond measure. And was it because they believed? Yes. But even more so, it was because our Lord + Jesus was gracious and merciful. For they had believed before—believed that fish would come at night in the shallow waters. But now, our Blessed Lord is gracious and merciful to them in a way they did not imagine, and at a time they did not expect. So gracious and merciful was He that “they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net were 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 only what we need 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. For, it is not what we wanted.

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, “Fear not.” (Which is to say, ‘Peace be with you.’ For with His mercy, there is nothing to fear, there is only forgiveness and peace.) 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 ‘Fear not.’ 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 henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

That is how it is with the Lord’s grace and mercy. It 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 have 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, "Fear not." For that is what He says to us in Holy Absolution, and which proclaims to us that we have peace and forgiveness with God.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us 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 day of your trouble, He will give you peace. Peace be with you! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the 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!