

Luke 5.1-11  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
1 July 2018  
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

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Beloved in the Lord: grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

"Put out into the deep!"

Serious, Jesus! The deep? We've fished all night. Nothing to be caught. Don't be unrealistic.

"Put out into the deep!"

Really? I'm not going to troll over there, drop the anchor, and go through all the work of setting the nets if I don't have a fish finder. What a waste.

"Put out into the deep!"

But Jesus! We just washed the nets. We're not ready. Tomorrow.

"Put out into the deep!"

But Jesus! That makes no sense!

And yet behold! At the word and command of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter makes no argument. You and I might care about wasting our time after slaving away all night. But not Peter. For it is the Lord who speaks.

You and I might say, "I'd rather hedge my bets and make this one a success. Where's the fish finder?"  
But not Peter. For it is the Lord who commands.

You and I might say, "Yes. Later." But not Peter. For now is the time of grace.

You and I might say, "Well, that makes no sense." But not Peter. For it is a word from the mouth of the Lord.

And so Peter does it.

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How's that going with you?

Thou shalt not covet. And we say, "Seriously? Pretty unrealistic, Lord."

Over our pre-marital cohabitation the Lord says, "You shall not commit adultery." And we say, "But I need to hedge my bets."

The Lord demands you control your tongue—especially in the Body of Christ. And you say, "But she deserves it."

The Lord commands you to fear, love and trust in no one and no thing more than Him. For this life and the next. And you say, "But I must still feather my own nest."

The time of grace is now. And you presume on the Lord's grace and say, "It'll be there tomorrow, too."

Whoever eats and drinks not discerning the body of Christ eats and drinks judgment unto himself. And you say, "That makes no sense whatsoever, Jesus."

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But not Peter.

In the words of the Nike ad, he just does it. And not because he's wearing his Nikes. Not because it makes sense. Not because he's prepped and ready to go. Not because he's got all the equipment any modern fisherman could desire. And certainly not because what Jesus says even remotely approaches anything like what he'd call realistic. He does it because the Lord told him to. Because the Lord commanded him to. Because it was the time of grace. Because it was Lord's revealed will and word.

And so Peter did it.

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Now, don't think that just because all that happened to Peter in that brief exchange was stuff that he wasn't ready for, that he couldn't understand, that made no sense to him and was, frankly, unrealistic—don't think that just because all that was true that it's also true that Peter was just tilting at windmills.

Because that's not how it plays out. Tilting at windmills would have been tossing in the nets, dragging them up empty, and doing it again and again and again. Nothing gained.

But behind the obscure words. Behind the apparent riddle. Behind what made no sense at all. Cloaked under the cover of nothing but words that fell from Jesus' mouth. And after Peter foolishly rowing out to the deep. Sweating away in the hot sun when no fish can be caught.... Well, take a peek.

Great blessing. Nets literally bursting with fish. A whole boat full of fish, followed by another. And both sinking under the weight. Enough to feed the whole village for days and weeks to come. Enough fish processing to give employment opportunities for the day laborers lounging about on the beach. Enough for Peter to take his just-healed mother-in-law out for dinner. A great catch of fishes.

And a great lesson to us latter-day Peters. To us would-be Peters who gladly say, "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." But remain skeptical. Especially when the light is difficult to see. To us would-be Peters who confess the Bible as God's very Word. But hold it sacred only when it's convenient.

So that with Peter—and for greater reason—we must confess, "Depart from me! For I am an unclean man!"

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But praise and thanks be to God that His Word is sent not for great catches of fish. But for great catches of men. And praise and thanks be to God that it's precisely for the unclean. For those of little faith. For you.

That's exactly what happened to Peter, isn't it? It's sort of his typical m.o. Go forth boldly. Then crumble. Confronted by the might and power of the Word, that's all Peter sees. The might and the power. And he perishes. His spirit collapses.

But Jesus won't have it that way. And so He tells Peter, "Fear not."

That's His Absolution. That's Jesus telling Peter that his sins are forgiven. That's Jesus using the same almighty and powerful word that had brought the great draught of fishes into the boat to catch a live man. To forgive even his sin of unbelief. To make the unclean fisherman clean. Not from dirt and sand and fish scales and fish slime. But from sin and the corruption of death. And with those simple, absolving words, now sin? Done away with. Permanently. Nailed to the accursed tree. Uncleaness? Washed away by the blood of the Son of God. And death? Gone. Swallowed up in Christ's victory over the grave.

And all of it bundled up into His mighty and powerful Word.

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Now. You can only imagine. Peter heard only a couple of words. The same amount in Greek as in English. 2 of them. Fear not.

But to understand what just those two words from the mouth of God can do, put yourself in his shoes! All the Lord has to do is *think* it and it's done. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10.31) Peter has come face to face with the holy and living God in whose hands are life and death—life for the saints; death for the sinners. And Peter's a sinner.

Now listen to this: if those two words had not been God's words, what do you think Peter would have done? Suppose James and John the sons of Zebedee—they was there, too—had shouted across from the other boat, "Come on, Peter. Pick yourself up!" "Sheesh, Peter. Stop being such a drama queen!" That wouldn't have changed a thing. For their word is not God's word. At least not yet.

But it's entirely different with Jesus. For the Word He speaks *is* God's Word. Because He is God. And bundled up into that word of the cross—such foolishness to those who are perishing, such a stumbling block to the Jews—is the power of God. The power of the Gospel. The same power that made fish swim into the net makes fear subside, forgives sins, banishes death, sends Satan packing, and puts sinners in heaven.

And it's that word that the Lord Jesus speaks to you every Sunday: "I forgive you all your sins." It's the same word that animates and makes your Baptism the power of salvation: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." It's the same word that attaches to bread and wine, makes them Christ's own Body and Blood, and puts into your mouth the Absolution won by the Lord Jesus on His holy cross.

And what makes them different is this: they are God's words and they do what they say. And they create the faith they demand. Peter couldn't enjoy or benefit from Jesus' word, "Fear not," without faith. Because how do you make yourself stop fearing if you don't believe? Impossible. But that's the kind of power this Word of God has. It does what it says. And in doing what it says it creates the faith that can enjoy it.

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Fellow-redeemed: this is exactly what the Lord does for you and wants to do for you. You come in here Sunday after Sunday needing to confess—even in your unwillingness to confess it!—that you are an unclean men. Just like Peter. But you hear no, "Pick yourself by your own bootstraps" stuff. Instead you hear the powerful Word of the Cross. You hear that your sins are for Christ's sake forgiven. You hear that your grave is nothing more than a bed. You hear that heaven is already yours for the sake of Christ.

Of course, again, it doesn't seem like much. Just words, right? But they're words pressed upon the lips of those who like Peter are called to be fishers of men. Who are called to catch dead men and make them alive through the Gospel and bring them into the fishing boat of the holy Christian church.

And because they're the words of those pressed into service by *Christ*. And because they're words given to speak by Christ Himself, guess what: They do what they say.

For they are powerful words: "Your sins are forgiven."

Amen.

*pax dei, etc.*

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