

## Luke 5:1-11

Introduction – ask congregation who has been fishing at any stage – follow up how did you do? was there much effort? Were you successful? Does anyone fish on a regular basis, 3-4 times of year maybe, why do you do it – explore the answers.

(Take out the nets and share them through the congregation – look at the 3 different nets and ask:

Would these be suitable for catching fish?  
Which would be most effective and why?

We'll explore God's teaching within our bible story about fishing more a little later on.

So today we are exploring our bible reading from Luke 5. We are told in the reading that the crowd were pressing in on Jesus; I cannot think of another place in the gospels where this physical sense of crowding in is expressed in quite the same way. They have come to hear

‘the word of God’, which is Luke’s distinctive term for Jesus’ message of the kingdom.

On the shores of Galilee there are a series of small, curved bays, the curved bank of the shore functions like the seating in an amphitheatre, or a cinema making it easy to hear someone speaking from the edge of the water or sitting in a boat, Rob and I have been very fortunate to go out on Lake Galilee in a small boat and seen the bays where Jesus taught from – being on a small boat in such a vast expanse of water made me feel quiet scared and vulnerable at times despite being excited to be there. The lake is about eight miles wide and fourteen miles long and was a popular place for fishing.

Let’s take a look back at the nets – do we think any of these would be any good for fishing out on a huge lake? Simon and his brother Andrew were washing their nets because they weren’t string or rope like these we have here, but in that time they were made of a fine fabric like linen which the fish couldn’t see at night which meant they could catch more, imagine their dismay to have not caught very much and the

disappointment after being out on the water all night, tired, fed up not very relaxing as we imagine fishing can be – it was hard work, exhausting work to make money for their families. The nets they would have been using were more like this one (take out the 4<sup>th</sup> net) except as I said it would have been made of very fine material. (Hold net up and explain about the “casting” of a net and the weights are used)

Explain –

During the night, the fishermen would stand on the boat or shore with the net slung over their shoulder. While holding on to the cord, they would flip the net out over the water so that it twirled and spread out wide. When it hit the water, the weights cause the net to drop to the bottom like a cone, trapping any fish within. Using the cord, the fisherman begins to slowly draw the net back up while the weights on the net draw together along the bottom, keeping the fish inside. Once the net is pulled up, and the fish removed, the whole process is repeated. This is the type of fishing used when Jesus tells them to cast their nets.

This is where the story begins to unfold – not only is Jesus teaching the fisherman out on the lake by telling them to cast their nets, but the crowds are still watching from the shoreline and the fishermen in the other boat are watching and listening too.

I love the detail that Jesus sees ‘two boats’ and that he gets into one of them; the other boat only comes into play in the second half of the story when Simon and his companions call on those with the other boat to help with the catch, these fishermen too later follow Jesus, Simon and Andrew.

Let’s pause for a moment – where would you like to be, on the shore, in the boat with Jesus or the second boat with the others. Imagine yourself where you’d like to be; are you in the first boat with Jesus helping to pull in the nets full of fish, do you imagine yourself in other boat, watching Jesus with Simon and Andrew, suddenly full nets are being pulled out of the lake and you are being asked to go and help, or are you part of the crowd still on the shoreline

watching and listening to all that is going on? Wherever you see yourself in the story, what you thinking or feeling? (Possible share and respond to others near you)

Because this miracle was unfolding before them, Simon realises Jesus' power and authority and throws himself before Jesus, Jesus' simple response is "Do not be afraid".

The catch of fish, and the whole activity of fishing, becomes a metaphor or more simply put, a teaching example or illustration for the ministry of sharing the gospel to which Simon and his friends are called. Jesus was using this activity to tell Simon and Andrew that they were to stop being fishermen but become fishers of men. Their lives from now on in would be to tell people about Jesus. Luke's description of Jesus' ministry starts with the picture of the crowd pressing in to hear the word of God, the extraordinary catch of fish. And Jesus' commission to Simon (and the others) to 'catch people alive'. The catch of fish is deliberate to teach those fishermen from here on in they wouldn't be fishing for fish anymore, they would be telling people about having faith, trust

and love for Jesus. There is an unmistakable emphasis on the decisive break with the past. 'From now on' they will be doing something quite different, and this means that after they have pulled their boats up on the shore (another nice 'eye-witness' detail) they leave everything—their business, their boats, their livelihood, their families and even this actual catch which could be sold to follow Jesus.

Jesus uses this very practical way of teaching, Simon, Andrew and the others that followed about mission and that call to share the gospel – telling other people about God's love and what it's like to be caught in the net of God.

As we gather here in church, this is great. Its wonderful to gather, see people, worship together, learn together about God's teaching but if that doesn't simulate or motivate us into action we're not really being caught up in God's teaching, we're not following his example of telling people out God and the way we love God and how that affects our lives – effectively the catch is worthless.

There's dozens of reasons or excuses why we think we're not good enough or that Jesus isn't interested in us but Jesus isn't interested in excuses, just like that day when Simon tried to make an excuse for not going back out on the boat to fish again.

Like Simon and Andrew standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee cleaning their nets, we could list a dozen reasons why Christ ought to choose somebody else to represent or to tell people about his love for us and that he loves and forgives us and wants to be friends with us. But, you know what? He's not interested in our excuses. He's only interested in using us to share the gospel message and to reconcile or bring back the world to God. And so, he says to us today, as he said to Simon so long ago,

“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch”— and don't be afraid.

It's not about fishing. It's about trusting the power of God to use us all, even when we think we're not good enough to tell and to lead others to Jesus Christ.

So, I am challenging myself and each of you - don't just sit there, do it! Put out into the deep, cast out that net and risk sharing your faith with someone this week. Invite them to come to church with you next Sunday or at our next AAA service, you won't believe the catch that's waiting for you.

Amen