

THE CALL OF THE FISHERMEN

Luke 5:1-11

This interesting event took place on the peaceful shore of the Lake of Genesareth, that famous body of water near which some of our Lord's most wonderful words were spoken, and some of His most wonderful works were done.

I. The Crowds. Luke 5:1-3.

Early one morning, when the scenery was most enchanting, Christ walked down to the beach. He was followed by a large number of people who were eager to hear what He might have to say. He never lacked an audience. His teaching so impressed and amazed the people that, no matter where He preached, all sorts of people flocked to hear Him.

On the beach were two fishing boats, from which the fishermen, Peter, James, and John had gone ashore to wash their nets, preparatory to the next night's fishing. Due to the presence of the clamorous multitude, the Master walked down to the water's edge and stepped into Simon Peter's boat. He requested Peter to thrust out the boat a little from the shore, which he did very readily and without any question. From that strange pulpit, trembling in the water, encircled with the majesty of the hills, overcast with the mighty dome of the heavens, with the blue waters at His feet, and with the birds for His choristers, Christ preached to the large number of people. Concerning the result of His message to the crowds, nothing is said.

II. The Command. Luke 5:4.

When our Lord had finished speaking, He told Peter to launch out into the deep water and to let down the net for a draught of fishes. This command was contrary to all accepted rules of the craft. Night was the proper time for fishing, for at that time the fish were feeding near the surface and were much easier caught in a net. To let down the net in the daytime would have appeared to be a profitless undertaking, and especially so in view of their lack of success during the previous night.

III. The Compliance. Luke 5:5.

In His reply to the command of Christ, Peter not only intimated how poor fishing had been during the night, but frankly expressed his willingness to do as Christ had bidden. Instead of saying that it was useless to try again in the bright sunshine, when prospects seemed to be the most unfavorable, Peter expressed his willingness to try because Christ had commanded it. His memorable answer, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net," is one of the finest expressions of unquestioning obedience to Christ that was ever recorded. He was simply acting in accordance with His word.

1. Obedience in spite of physical exhaustion.

"Master, we have toiled all the night," expresses the feeling of weariness and fatigue. From sunset to sunrise, they had rowed up and down the lake, casting their heavy nets overboard and drawing them up again and again, empty. Their tired muscles registered their protest against any further attempt without food and rest. But, ignoring his

personal feeling, Peter unhesitatingly obeyed Christ.

2. Obedience in the midst of doubt.

To those expert fishermen Christ's command was very strange. Since they had failed during the night, it was difficult for them to see even a remote possibility of success when the blue waters were shimmering in the morning sun. Regardless of all doubt, Peter promptly obeyed Christ, saying, "Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." The word of Christ was final with him, and it should be with us.

3. Obedience in spite of failure.

Through the weary hours of the night, those experienced fishermen had worked hard at an honorable task in the right place, but they had failed. Rather than sympathize with them in their failure, Christ told them to go at once and try again, which command they promptly obeyed.

IV. The Catch. Luke 5:6-7.

As soon as they cast their nets into the water, their obedience was richly rewarded. It was so great a catch that their nets began to break, and they had to call upon their partners, who were in the other boat, for help. The fish were so numerous that they filled both of the boats to such an extent that they were on the verge of sinking.

This incident teaches us that there is always a blessing in obeying Christ despite appearances or adverse circumstances. Abundant success will crown the efforts of all who render implicit obedience to Him. To "trust and obey" is the secret of a happy, successful, and useful Christian life.

V. The Cry. Luke 5:8-9.

Peter and his associates were amazed at the draught of fishes which they had taken. His reaction was such that he fell at the feet of his Master and cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." His cry revealed the fact that he had received a two-fold vision out of this remarkable experience. It was a vision of himself--his littleness and his unworthiness. It was also a vision of Christ, who loomed more wondrous to him than ever before. His consciousness of sin and his genuine contrition for sin qualified him for usefulness in the service of Christ.

VI. The Commission. Luke 5:10-11.

Christ called these fishermen to His special service. He commissioned them to the same kind of work, but in another and higher realm. They were no longer to catch fish, but to catch men for Christ. That was a far more worthy occupation. It was and is the noblest work in all the world. In response to His commission, they forsook all and followed Him. Such followers are a joy to Christ and a benediction to the world. May we fully yield our lives to Him to be used when and where He desires.