

Sermon – 12/12/2010 am

Miraculous Catch

Study Text: Luke 5:1-11

Jesus went through the towns of Galilee preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick. The town of Capernaum was a hub for his ministry. Capernaum was by the Sea of Galilee, or as Luke more correctly calls it Lake Gennesaret. This was quite a large lake, about the size of Lake George near Canberra when it is full. The lake supported many fishermen. Among these were Peter and his brother Andrew, as well as James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

We have already been told how Jesus cast an evil spirit out of a man in the synagogue at Capernaum. We have also been told how Jesus healed a sick woman in a house in this town. Now we are told about a miraculous catch of fish in the lake probably near Capernaum. Jesus had power over the demons; he had power over sickness and he had power over the fish in the sea. Is there anything over which Jesus does not have power and authority?

1. Great Teaching

So it was as the people crowded around him to hear the word of God (5:1). Luke does not indicate just when his event took place although it was early in ministry of Jesus. It follows naturally from the previous chapter where Jesus was preaching and healing, and the people were flocking to him.

Matthew and Mark write of Jesus walking by the same lake and calling Peter and Andrew, and James and John to follow him, but they do not mention the catch of fish. Despite the similarities this may well be another occasion. John writes of these men meeting Jesus on yet another occasion. Luke tells us that on this occasion they *forsook all* or left everything and followed Jesus (5:11). He tells us how Peter was profoundly moved by a miraculous catch of fish.

Jesus was on the beach teaching the people about the kingdom of God. As the crowd grew they pressed in on him. He saw two boats drawn up on the beach. The fishermen were nearby cleaning their nets after being out on the lake out all night. Jesus got into one of the boats and asked the owner, who was Simon Peter, to put out a little into the water. He sat down to continue teaching the crowd of people. Luke here refers to Simon Peter as Simon, but later on he refers to him as Peter.

Since Peter was in the boat he would have heard all that Jesus taught. We are not told exactly what Jesus said but presume he spoke in parables as he taught about the kingdom of God. Peter would have heard Jesus prior to this in the synagogue and also when Jesus came to his house and healed his mother-in-law.

Peter was listening and learning but his life had not yet been totally impacted by Jesus. There was wonder and amazement but not total personal surrender. Peter was a straightforward, 'no nonsense' sort of man. He was not a hardened sceptic, nor a 'follow the crowd' sort of fellow.

When Jesus had finished speaking he turned to Peter and told him to push out further into the lake and let down his nets for a catch (5:4). Peter had been up all night fishing and had caught nothing. Night was the best time to fish. If he had caught nothing that night he was not going to catch any the next morning – or so Peter thought. He was tired, and reluctant to put his washed nets into the water again.

Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing he said to Jesus (5:5). Peter would not have listened to anyone else telling him how to catch fish. But there was something different, something special, about the man who told him to put out into the deep. He taught amazing things and he had healed a lot a people including his mother-in-law. Would Peter do as Jesus said? Would he obey the word of Jesus?

Put yourself in Peter's shoes for a moment. If it was me I would have been straight out into the deep. Why? Because I know nothing about fishing. Having ever caught only one tiny fish in my life I am ready to listen to any advice about fishing. Still I would have to consider the fact that Peter was tired after being up all night.

Jesus speaks to each one of us in our own situation. He calls us to obey him no matter what that situation is. If you have a good job and know that obeying Jesus means losing a whole raft of benefits – not to mention someone else will take your job – will you obey Jesus? I once heard a lady say she felt called to mission work but could not go because it would mean leaving a secure job and losing out on her superannuation.

Jesus says if you love him you will obey his commands. The Bible says *do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together* (Hebrews 10:25). There is a good starting point in obeying Jesus. If you cannot even commit to coming to worship how can Jesus count on you to launch out into the deep?

2. Great Catch

What happened when Peter did as Jesus asked? The story is well known but we must not lose sight of the amazing thing that happened on the lake that day. Peter was absolutely blown away when he hauled in his nets to find more fish than he had ever caught before. He saw his nets begin to break under the load and signalled to his partners to come and help him. They worked hard and fast to get the fish into the two boats; and then the boat began to sink (5:6, 5). Eventually they got this most amazing catch to the shore.

Was Jesus just a better fisherman than Peter? But every fisherman knew night was the best time to fish, not when the sun was shining on the water. Was it that Jesus knew where the fish were? Was it that he somehow got the fish to gather at this point? We do not know and it is not important. It was a miracle like the healing of the sick. Jesus has power over demons, over disease and over all creation and created things. With God nothing is impossible (1:37). Is this what you believe?

3. Greater Catch

Peter was blown away we said. Peter must have been so excited at such a catch. But this is not what we read. When Peter saw the great catch he fell down at Jesus knees (5:8). He did not run around the boat with excitement. He fell down before Jesus. Peter knew it was a miracle. He knew that it was a mighty work of Jesus. Peter felt ashamed that he had hesitated

to do what Jesus told him. And not only that, but he felt shame for all his sin. He realized he was in the presence of the Holy One of God.

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! (5:8). Peter up to this time had respected Jesus as master and teacher but now he turned to Jesus, falling down before the Lord. ‘Lord’ can simply mean ‘sir’, a term of respect, but here it means much more, as indicated by Peter’s action and his words.

Peter felt the gaze and the glory of God the Son. He felt naked before Jesus, realizing that Jesus knew everything about him. He was afraid. He wanted to run and hide, much like Adam in the garden. *Depart from me ... O Lord* he said to Jesus.

Referring to the ‘word that was with God and the word that was God’, John wrote *the light shines into the darkness* (John 1:5). The light of the gospel of Jesus Christ penetrates to the hidden recesses of the heart. It exposes sin. Those who love sin love the darkness (John 3:20). They flee the light. When Peter saw the miracle and realized who Jesus was he saw the filth of his sin. He was *naked and open before the eyes of him to whom we must give account* (Hebrews 4:13). He was afraid as the *Judge of the secrets of men* looked down on him (Romans 2:16).

Peter’s reaction reminds us of that of Job. After a lot of complaining from Job the Lord appeared to him. Job felt guilty as he said *but now my eye sees you. I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes* (Job 42:56). Peter reminds us of Isaiah’s response to the vision of the Lord in the temple. *Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips* (Isaiah 6:5). He reminds us of the apostle Paul who met the risen Jesus on the Damascus road. Trembling and astonished he said *what do you want me to do* (Acts 9:6).

All these men realized they were in the presence of the Holy God. They knew they were sinner’s standing – or falling down – before Almighty God. Peter did not need to be told his sin – it was obvious as he fell down before Jesus. Remember, he had heard Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom. You have heard the gospel. What is your response? Do you see your sin in the light of the glory of God in Christ Jesus?

‘Depart from me’ said Peter. But Jesus did not depart – and Peter did not run away. Jesus said to him *do not be afraid* (5:10). You can picture Jesus putting his hand out to Peter and calming his fears. Jesus reached out to this man who confessed his sin. Jesus’ miracle with regard to the fish had worked an even greater miracle in the heart of Peter. He saw his sin and confessed before Jesus.

Peter’s words brought great joy to the heart of Jesus. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (15:7). Here was a precious soul being brought out of the darkness of sin and death into the light of the gospel. Here was a soul being delivered from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God. How wonderful is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Still Greater Catch

Peter was a fisherman but Jesus had other plans for his life. Peter was the first ‘catch of Jesus’, the first of his disciples, and Jesus called him to be a catcher of men. *From now on you will catch men* (5:10). ‘Catch’ is a different word here. It refers to catching for life, not for death.

Peter's partners, namely James and John, had also seen the great catch of fish. They heard what Jesus said to Peter. After they got their boats to shore the four of them *forsook all and followed* Jesus (5:11). They left everything; they left the greatest catch of their life, they left their boats and even their father (Mark 1:20) to follow Jesus. They did not hesitate. They did not look back. Jesus called them to catch men and off they went.

It is somewhat disappointing to go to mission conferences nowadays. The world is changing and mission is changing of course. But those on the platforms today say how they are going out for a few months to see if mission is for them. Others are going out in their holidays or when the weather is good. Is this the sort of following that Jesus calls us to?

If you are a believer Jesus calls you to catch people for the kingdom of God. You cannot make people believe of course, but how will they believe if they do not hear the about Jesus. You may be the person Jesus has called to speak to a certain person about him. Will you follow Jesus and catch men and women, and boys and girls for Jesus?

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