

NEVER LESS THAN THIS!

Luke 5:1-11

This morning we're going to turn our attention to a specific moment in the life of Jesus. I almost said that we're going to turn our attention to a specific moment in the life of Jesus that is *amazing* — but then I thought: *What moment in the life of God incarnate could possibly be less than amazing?!* One thing is for sure: We are going to learn about our King, His heart, His ways, His power and His plans.

We're also going to see one man's response to the very clear directions given by Jesus — directions that didn't make any sense to that man. And in that man's response we are given **the absolute baseline** for how we're to respond to the words and wisdom of our King.

Luke 5:1-11 ¹On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ²and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Luke 5 takes us to the shores of the Sea of Galilee.



Peter, Andrew, James and John grew up on this body of water. It's called "the Sea of Galilee" and "the Sea of Tiberius. Interesting — Only Luke calls it a lake. Luke, the author, had been on the Mediterranean with Paul on several occasions. He knew the difference between ocean and lake — and this was a lake. It is a beautiful, natural, freshwater lake fed by the Jordan River. It is about 13 miles long and at its widest 8 miles across and about 1,200 ft. deep. The shores of the lake form the outline of a harp — so the Hebrew name for it is *Kinneret*, which means "Harp." It's in a geological rift and sits 680 feet BELOW sea level, so the weather there can be somewhat tropical. The word *GENNESARET* in the Greek = Garden. It is beautiful!

THE FIRST THING Luke tells us about this situation is that **the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God**

To get our heads around what was happening there we need to see what Peter and the guys were doing when these people showed up
They were washing their nets — that tells us that it was **EARLY in the morning**. They had finished their night of fishing and they were cleaning up. This was close to being a sunrise service! It was early in the morning and **the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God!** They weren't

crowding in around Jesus to see a miracle — they were pressing in on Jesus to hear Him teach! They were **that hungry** to hear Jesus speak to them! As I looked at the reason they pressed in upon Jesus I was reminded what Jesus said when tempted by the devil in the wilderness: *“Man shall not live by bread alone — but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Job said that he *esteemed God’s word more than his necessary food*. That is why they would follow Jesus into deserted places — places where there was no access to food. But they weren’t thinking about breakfast, or lunch or dinner. They came hungry for His Word — and it is so beautiful to see how Jesus made sure they had food for their bodies.

So here in **Luke 5** we see men and women up at the break of day — probably shocked that anyone else was even awake — let alone headed in the same direction they were going. All of that just to get close enough to Jesus to hear His words.

That speaks volumes to us in the 21st century. When people are put off by limited facilities or service times or locations — they aren't too desperate to draw near to Jesus and have Him speak into their lives.

These people were PRESSING up against Jesus. Imagine how hard it would have been for Jesus to teach them as they were pushing against each other — and backing Jesus right up to the shore of the Galilee. They wanted to HEAR Jesus speak — and had Jesus tried to speak to that crowd His voice would have never carried past the first few rows of people.

²and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

I love this! Jesus did not let the pressing and the pushing put Him off and Jesus wasn’t stopped by the apparent limitations of the venue. Jesus saw a way to put some distance between himself and the people and used the Lake as a natural P.A. system.

Jesus gives us a great example to follow when faced with physical limitations and hindrances to getting the Word of God to the people

QUOTE: J.C. RYLE Expository Thoughts on the Gospels — *"We can NOT wait for every obstacle to be removed before we put our hand to the plough. What then are we to do? Shall we sit still and do nothing? God forbid! If we can not do all that we WANT, let us do all that we CAN"*

I think that speaks powerfully to US

Luke **does not** tell us **WHAT** Jesus taught or **HOW LONG** Jesus taught. But Luke **does** tell us **WHAT JESUS DID** when He **finished**.

4And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets (second person plural) for a catch (Jesus assures them they will catch fish)."

REMEMBER — Jesus is very deliberate here! He is asking Peter to do something that is going force Peter to make a very important decision concerning Jesus.

A carpenter had just invaded the world of fishermen and started telling them to do things that no fisherman would have done. Yet Jesus says, *Listen to me; do what I say, and this will be a successful effort.*

Dr. Derwin L. Gray — *We've made spiritual growth more complex than it needs to be. Obey Jesus even when you do not want to. You are a new creation in Messiah Jesus, with a new identity and new power. Walk in the Spirit & put on the Messiah. Fill your mind with gospel truth. Say, "Yes," to him.*

Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!

Master — this is not the word "Lord." It means boss, captain, supervisor. Simon (Peter) is trying to help Jesus out here.

Jesus, we're catching on to the fact that there are certain things we need your help with — but there are certain things we don't need your help

*with. I fish! I pretty much born with a fishing net in my hand. I grew up on this lake. I know **how** to fish. I know how to fish **this** lake. I know **where** the fish are — and **when** they're there. You, on the other hand are a carpenter. **You** grew up on a hill — **I** grew up down here on the water.*

What Peter doesn't know at this moment is that, YES, Jesus grew up in a village on the elevations above the Sea of Galilee — a little place called Nazareth that was essentially voted "worse place in Israel to live"! But Jesus was from somewhere WAY above Nazareth. Jesus actually pre-existed all of the created universe. He is the omniscient and omnipotent creator who **SPOKE** the universe into existence. He left His throne in heaven and came into human flesh to do a totally different kind of fishing — and Peter and the others didn't know ANYTHING about THAT kind of fishing.

Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word —

I prefer the King James language here.

KJV — NEVERTHELESS at thy word I will let down the nets.

That is so much stronger than the conjunction "but" and lends actually defines **the absolute baseline** for how we're to respond to the word's and wisdom of our King

Peter was saying: *None of that makes sense to me, a fisherman. But **never less than this — at Your word!***

That has to be the motto of the disciple. That has to be the motto of every community of believers. That has to be the motto of the husband. That has to be the motto of the wife. That has to be the motto of the dad and mom. That has to be the motto of the child. That has to be the motto of every ministry and every minister. That has to be Metro's motto. **Nothing Less Than Your Word, Lord!** EVEN WHEN what He says makes us uncomfortable. EVEN WHEN what He says derails our ideas, our preferences, or sensibilities.

No doubt Peter made that statement while struggling with doubt. *"This is against everything I know as a fisherman — I don't agree with your*

plan — but I'm going to do what You say! Nothing less than Your Word You!

That was why Jesus got into Peter's boat in the first place. That is why he told Peter to do what fishermen would never do in that lake.

BIG LESSON FOR US — It is **SO** important that we learn to obey the Lord even when we don't understand **what** it is that He is doing — and even when we don't understand **why** He is doing it — even when we don't feel like or want to do what He says!

⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it (literally: Peter, having seen), he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

WHY would Peter say THAT? Peter never said that when he saw Jesus heal his mother-in-law. Peter never said that when he saw Jesus heal countless men and women in front of his house.

Let me throw this out to you: There is a vast difference between doing and hearing. It's when you finally say to Jesus, *Your word trumps all* — and you do what He asks that you see Jesus for who He really is. And that will always leave us undone!

Jesus deliberately brought Peter into the realm where Peter felt most confident and most competent.

You don't catch fish in the middle of the day. You don't catch fish in the middle of the day in deep water. It's just not supposed to happen that way. Peter said "Yes" to Jesus in the face of everything he believed could not happen. So, when Jesus did everything that Peter knew shouldn't happen — that left Peter wrecked! He was wrecked because he discovered who Jesus is — and that always leads us to discover who we are!

Jesus didn't direct them to that catch of fish because he'd been to the Bass Pro store in Galilee and picked up the latest fish-finder. Jesus orchestrated that great catch of fish by virtue of His divine nature.

When Jesus came into human flesh, He never divested Himself of His deity. Here in [Luke 5](#) He exercised His deity. There were times when Jesus exercised His omniscience (the fact that He is all knowing) and His omnipotence (His absolute power). I believe this moment in [Luke 5](#) was an expression of both! Jesus not only knew **where** to catch those fish — I believe Jesus also kept the fish away from Peter's nets all night long the night before. And then in the middle of the next day He's saying, "*Come here fishies — into the net with you!*"

THE POINT is this: Jesus was at work in all of this. There are times when Jesus permits our nets to be empty. He steps into those areas of our life where we are most secure without Him, places of our lives where we are most proficient and most confident — and He holds the fish out of the net so-to-speak. It's a hard thing when He does it. But when we say "Yes" to Jesus in the face of everything we believe cannot happen — that is when we discover who Jesus is — and that leaves us gloriously undone — and that glorious undoing of who we thought we were is the beginning of discovering who we really are in Jesus.

Jesus loves us enough to do that! He knows that we need to know that He is expert when it comes to our lives! The guys who thought they were the experts are the ones **astounded** by the catch of fish!

Let's put this into our every day life. Jesus is the expert when it comes to marriage. Maybe you're looking at your marriage saying, "*Lord, I've done this. I've labored long and hard and that net is empty. I have nothing left!* **That** is when you need to say — *Never the less — at your word I will honor my husband / love my wife sacrificially.*" Jesus is the expert when it comes to raising children. Maybe you have a child, or children, that are far from the Lord. You've labored hard — sat up through long, dark nights — and you're heartbroken because that net is empty. **That** is when you need to say — "*Never the less Lord — at your word I will let down the net again.*"

THAT is when we see who Jesus is!

VERSE 8 literally says — **Simon Peter having seen**. This was a catch of fish that none of them had ever seen! And Luke tells us they were **seized with astonishment** — astonishment took them and it shook them.

And at that moment Simon Peter realized something that he had never seen when Jesus healed his mother-in-law, or when he saw Jesus perform other miracles.

This was SIMON PETER'S world now — this was the arena that he knew all about — this is **where** fish were not supposed to be caught — this was **when** fish were not supposed to be caught. It was in that arena that Simon Peter understood that he was in the presence of deity.

And that is what moved Simon Peter to say, **“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”** He didn't call Jesus *rabbi*. He didn't call Jesus *boss*, or *supervisor* or *commander*. He called Jesus **Lord**. The word Luke used is *Kurios*. That is the word Luke used in the opening of this Gospel when speaking of Yahweh, the true and living God. Simon Peter didn't understand **how** it could be — but he did understand that Jesus is **the Lord** — the God of Abraham. And **THAT** is what Jesus was up to all along when He told Peter to launch out into the deep.

DON'T MISS THIS — If anyone has a genuine encounter with Jesus, they are never left the same. There is always transformation. A saving encounter with Jesus not only changes your relationship with God, there is a radical reconstruction of your identity!

First — When you get your first real glimpse of Jesus you **finally** understand what you are and what you're not. Look at **verse 8**.

⁸But when Simon Peter saw it (literally: Peter, having seen), he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

From Genesis to Revelation, whenever anyone truly gets near to God it's not warm and fuzzy — it's traumatic. For example — one of the most stellar

characters in the Bible was a man named Daniel. He was the best and the brightest of his generation; great looks and great intellect. He was also unwavering in his love of God while living in a city given over to the worship of false gods.

Daniel 10:8 (KJV) Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness (ESV - radiant appearance) was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

We see this on the human level. When you are near people who are physically beautiful or intellectually brilliant or incredibly skilled you become painfully aware of what you're not. Their beauty serves to magnify your flaws, their intellectual and artistic strengths show you your weaknesses. Infinitely more so — that is what happens when you actually get close to Jesus. He is more amazing than you could ever imagine! You want to be near to Him, but it is in His presence that you discover what you really are! **That** explains Peter's response!

Here's the deal — If you think you're getting close to Jesus and you're not seeing the filth of your own heart, then you're not getting close to the real Jesus. How can you come into the presence of infinite power **without** discovering the truth that you are utterly weak? How can you come into the presence of perfect, humble, selfless love without discovering how selfish and proud and self-centered you are?

But we see something more in all of this — When Peter saw who Jesus really is, he not only discovered that he was more wicked and sinful than he ever dared believe — he also discovered that he was more loved than he ever dared to hope.

Jesus would have been sitting in the boat — and Peter fell to his own knees at the knees of Jesus — utterly wrecked by the sense of his sinfulness in the presence of God — and he said to Jesus, *Leave me! You don't want to be anywhere close to me! I'm a sinful man.* And Jesus said

¹⁰... **“Do not be afraid (literally – not fear)**

Peter — *I know who you are. You are a sinful man. But **do not be afraid***

from now on — Life as you knew it is jettisoned. From this moment forward — from now into the future — **you will be catching men.**”

FIRST — This was much more than a change of profession! In it Jesus was saying, *I want you to **follow** Me. I want you to be **with** Me. I want **you** to be a part of **My** mission.*

Jesus invites forgiven sinners into a living relationship with God. Because of the cross and resurrection of Jesus we can become members of the household of God, we become adopted sons and daughters of the living God and we get to be a part of God’s business of catching men and women who are living in the kingdom of death and darkness and placing them in the Kingdom of His beloved Son.

THAT is a WHOLE NEW IDENTITY!

Jesus told Peter that from that moment forward he was not going to be a fisherman — he was going to be fishing **for men!**

catching men literally means to catch men alive. That word is only used only **one** other time in the New Testament. You might be surprised to see how it is used

***2 Timothy 2:26** and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

Satan is out to *catch men alive* — He’s caught many! Jesus is out to *catch men alive* — and He invites us to be a part of His mission.

HERE’S THE POINT — A real encounter with Jesus doesn't mean that you have to leave your profession — all though it might involve that. But a real encounter with Jesus doesn’t just deliver to you your personal ticket to heaven. Not that being saved from hell and saved to heaven is any small

thing thing! It IS huge! And IS personal! But that is a very small view of the Gospel! Entering into a saving relationship with Jesus radically restructures your identity. Your identity is now wrapped up in Jesus. You are no longer what you do. Work has been the source of man's identity throughout history. English names like *Fisher, Baker, Cook, Butcher* and *Smith* were given to families because that was what they did. They caught fish, they baked bread, they worked with meat, they worked with metal. In the most literal way they understood who they were in light of what they did.

But that all changes when you meet Jesus in a life changing way. It is no longer what you do that defines you. Your identity is wrapped up in who Jesus is, and who you are to Him. Now what you do becomes the context where you experience fellowship with Jesus, worship Jesus, and live on mission with Jesus — to catch men alive.

In the case of Peter, Andrew, James and John, Jesus called them out of a profession to be fully devoted to that mission. Jesus can and still does do that. But as a rule — Jesus calls men and women to see their profession as the place where they are a part of that mission

PERSONAL — Before I met Jesus I was coaching football. Then I met Jesus and Jesus essentially said, *"Richard, I want you to win souls, not just games."* That radically changed the way I coached

Then there came a time when Jesus called me out of coaching into pastoring (with so many of the things I learned about coaching connected with being a pastor.

If you meet Jesus and you're a defense attorney, Jesus will say, *"Your business is to keep people out of prison — But I want you to make it your business to not only keep them out of jail, I want you keep them out of hell."* If you meet Jesus and you're a real estate broker, Jesus will say, *"Your business is to close deals and sell real estate.... Now I want you to see that same business as the place where you can persuade people to gain an interest in eternal things"*

But it doesn't stop there! Look at what these men did when they

discovered that Jesus is Lord.

¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

What was on the shore? They didn't just leave the nets. They left the catch. No one had ever seen such a catch. It was so great that two boats were sinking under its weight. There was more money in that catch of fish on the beach than those men had ever seen before. They left **that** catch of fish on the shore to follow Jesus and fish for men.

A real encounter with Jesus radically restructures your value system. Jesus and His Kingdom transcend everything!

Towards the end of **1 John 2** we are told that there are essentially three things that move and motivate fallen culture. One of them is called "*the lust of the eyes*" — possessions. Before meeting Jesus *things* own you. You are possessed by your possessions. Jesus changes that! They didn't understand it completely at that moment — but they understood that there was another wealth that was greater than the wealth lying there on the shore.

CLOSE

Have you met the real Jesus? There's a way to know for sure: If you have met the real Jesus you will discover that you are more sinful than you ever dared imagine — and yet more loved than you ever dared to hope. There will be a radical restructuring of your identity and your value system.

Peter watched Jesus work in amazing ways in the lives of other people. But he was left unchanged. In the same way you can go to church — watch Jesus doing things in peoples lives all around you — and walk away unchanged.

I'm praying that Jesus has — Jesus is — breaking into your world — like He broke into Peter's world — and that you find yourself like Peter, totally undone. Own your sin — and own Him as Lord — and you will receive the forgiveness of sins — enter into a living relationship with the living God.

The Bible calls that eternal life! But THAT life is a life in His Kingdom! THAT is why Jesus said this to His disciples: *Seek first the Kingdom of God!*

For those who have met Jesus — I pray that the opening part of **Luke 5** has shown us that the Lord's commands can appear to be unreasonable and go against everything we know in our area of expertise. Our natural response is usually much like Peter's: *"You stick to TEACHING and I'll stick to fishing. If you don't fish I won't teach."*

Sometimes Lord's commands go against the grain of our very real experiences. Like Peter we feel like saying, *"We've tried that — we toiled all night and caught nothing."*

Sometimes the Lord's commands go against our human capacity and resources. *"I'm tired.... I've worked all night and I just want to wash my nets and go home and sleep"*

In those moments we need to resort to the baseline for our relationship with Jesus: **NEVER LESS THAN THIS — At Your Word!** Because YOU are the Lord, and YOU know everything about everything. Whatever you want to do in my world is the place where I will see who you are — you as Lord YOU love me and YOUR plan for my life transcends my greatest dreams. **That** must be our default response.

NEVER LESS THAN THIS — At Your Word!

That has to be the motto of the disciple. **That** has to be the motto of a church. **That** has to be the motto of the husband. **That** has to be the motto of the wife. **That** has to be the motto of the dad and mom. **That** has to be the motto of the child. **That** has to be the motto of every ministry and every minister. **That** has to be Metro's motto. ***Nothing Less Than Your Word, Lord!***