

Sermon: A Deeper Calling
Text: Luke 5:1-11
Date: February 7, 2010
Place: Jesup First UMC

There's something I need to tell you this morning that's a little embarrassing. I've tried to get over it; I've practiced; I've even taken lessons, but I still can't swim. Oh, I can do the mechanics: I can stroke with my arms and paddle with my legs; and I really love the water. But once I get close to the place where the pool drops and the water touches the bottom of my chin, it's time to turn around and go back to my comfort zone. And yet, I've spent a lot of time, standing by and watching others swim in the deep, wishing I could too. You see, something within me – in the deepest part of who I am – wants to just take off and go.

Now, I'm not just talking about swimming. There is within me – at the deepest part of who I am – a longing for something more, a deeper experience, a deeper relationship with God. And sometimes, I think I've spent a lifetime, playing in the shallows. Oh, what it must be like to launch out into the deep with God!

One day, a crowd gathered around Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. In fact, there were so many people that He was being pushed into the water. So, He got into a boat and taught the crowd. And when He finished, He turned to Simon and said: “*Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for the catch.*”

Now, that's not exactly what Simon had in mind; he had fished all night without catching anything, but he did what Jesus asked him to do and when he started to pull in the nets, there was so many fish that

he had to call for help. Then, he fell at Jesus' knees and said: "Lord, please leave me for I am a sinful man," but Jesus said: "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be catching people." And Luke says: "As soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus."

You know, brothers and sisters, we're all at different places on our spiritual journeys, but we still have one thing in common. No matter where we are, God is calling us deeper. He's calling us all to "launch out into the deep," but how do we do that?

First, we must learn to trust Him! That's what the Bible calls faith. Jesus said: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Now, Simon was a fisherman and he basically knew two things: one, he had already worked all night and caught nothing and two, daytime is not the time to go fishing. Those who fished the Sea of Galilee fished at night among the shallows near the shore, but Jesus said: "Launch out into the deep and put down your nets for the catch;" He's calling Simon to trust Him even when it doesn't make much sense.

You know, faith is the key to a healthy relationship with God. Paul said: "By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourself, even that is a gift of God." In fact, the Bible says: "Without faith, is it impossible to please God." And Simon basically said: "*Master, we worked hard all night and didn't catch anything, but if you say so, I'll trust you.*"

One night a man was walking along a mountain trail when he slipped and fell over the edge. And you know, it seemed like he tumbled for an eternity and

then, finally, he grabbed onto a tree root and held on for dear life. Then, he began to yell for help: “*Is anybody up there?*” And finally, someone came along and yelled into the darkness: “*Hey man, you’re only 3 feet off the ground. Let go.*” And the man held on for dear life and yelled back: “*Is there anybody else up there?*”

You know, sometimes the things that God asks us to do just don’t make sense, but we can trust Him. We can trust that He knows what we don’t know and that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Second, we must learn to obey Him! With little or no hesitation, Simon pushed out into the deep and let down his nets for the catch.

Neil Marten was a member of British Parliament. Once he was giving a group of his constituents a guided tour through the House of Commons when the chancellor walked by in all his garb. And Lord Hailsham recognized his friend among the group and yelled: “*Neil.*” And not even hesitating, the entire tour group fell to their knees.

Now, that’s obedience! Thomas a Kempis said: “*Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is simply disobedience.*” There’s not a more vivid picture of disobedience in scripture than Jonah. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh; Jonah went to Tarsish. Jonah was bound and determined that he was not going to obey God. And look at the consequences: he was swallowed up and stayed in the belly of a big fish for three days. But Simon

learned there is a reward for obedience and he pulled in so many fish that he had to call for help.

It is not ours to question or to drag our feet; God calls us to obedience. In fact, the Bible says: **“Obedience is better than sacrifice.”**

Third, we must learn to confess our failures! Verse 8 says: **“When Simon saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.’”** Now, Simon had just seen the most incredible event of his life and within seconds, he was asking Jesus to leave! You see, in light of Jesus’ power and authority and glory, Simon suddenly realized his own sinfulness.

One day, Isaiah went to the Temple to pray. He was burdened down by the loss of his friend, King Uzziah. And while Isaiah was praying in the Temple, he had a vision of God; he said: **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and sitting upon His throne.”** And immediately, Isaiah cried out: **“Woe is me, for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips.”**

You know, friends, we all blow it. Even with the purest of intentions, we all fail God. Paul told the church at Rome: **“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”** But it’s one thing to fall down and it’s another thing all together to stay down. And so, John says: **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

Confession doesn't build a barrier between us and God; confession breaks down the barriers that sin builds between us and God.

Fourth, we must learn to seek and serve others! Jesus said: ***"From now on, you will catch people."*** It's very clear that the Gospels use fishing as an analogy for evangelism. And the size of this catch is meant to tell us about the size of the Kingdom of God, how it includes people of every race, tribe, and tongue.

And so, Simon spent the rest of His life, catching people, preaching and teaching and caring for people. He became their leader. On the Day of Pentecost, it is Simon Peter who preaches and welcomes 3000 people into the church. And later, in Acts 10, it is Simon Peter who proclaims the gospel at Cornelius' house and welcomes even the Gentiles into the church.

Do you remember what Simon Peter called the church? A Kingdom of Priests! As Protestant Christians, we believe in the Priesthood of All Believers. We believe all Christians are called to proclaim the Gospel; all Christians are called to visit the sick, and care for the widowed, the orphaned and the outcasts; and all Christians are called to use their gifts, talents and skills to serve God by serving others.

And that's how we grow in our discipleship. That's how we come to know God deeper and more fully. That's why people that go on mission trips, come back blessed and revived and renewed! We grow by serving others.