

## *The First Day of Forever*

### *Luke 5:1-11*

Peter's life at Capernaum was peaceful and predictable. The lap of lake waves outside his bedroom window was like the tick of a clock. And the smell of fresh fish was like bread to a baker.

When he was still a skinny little boy, he started sailing out on the lake with his father. He learned to read the waves and scan the sky for storms. He studied the ways of the fish: where they fed and where they schooled.

Dusks followed dawns and years slid slowly by. Before long, Simon was man. And the boats, the nets and the business were all his.

He never dreamed his life would be any different than his father's. He would sail the sea and play out his nets until his fingers gnarled like an old oak tree.

But Simon was wrong. Wonderfully wrong! A day would dawn like thousands of others. But before the sun set, his life would be completely changed. And nothing would ever be the same.

People but dimly remember the name his parents gave him. Instead, he is forever known by the nickname a Friend gave him.

That Friend was named Jesus. And the fisherman became His follower by invitation. That invitation is still extended to those who claim Christ as Friend. It is open to you and me.

And today could be the first day of forever for us.

### *Consecration*

It had been a long night. Since sunset's purple blush faded to indigo, Simon had cast his nets. But while crickets scratched out their chirps across the water from the shore and night birds called above the waves, the nets came up empty.

In the first gray light of dawn, Peter, Andrew and Zebedee's sons gave up. They stowed their nets in the stern their nets and rowed to little half-moon cove.

As the sun crept up over the ridge, they beached the boats on the sandy shore. Just then, Jesus strolled down the shoreline. And a crowd of people followed Him.

The fishermen paused a moment to watch as they spread their nets along the shore. Then they knelt down and began to clean seaweed and bottom slime from the mesh nets.

Jesus paused a few yards from where the fishermen knelt over their nets. Then He began to speak.

Zebedee's two sons, Andrew, and Peter listened as they worked. But every moment more people came to hear the Master. And they all pressed in close to hear, so close Christ was almost crowded into the water.

*Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. Verses 1-2*

The big fisherman had followed Jesus for weeks in Judea. But that is about all the he did. He followed. But now, whether Peter realized it or not, his relationship with the Redeemer was moving up to a whole new level.

*And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. Verse 3*

Jesus glanced over at Peter and pushed His way through the throng to where the fishermen were working. Then the Son of God did something wonderful. He asked a favor of Simon: the use of his fishing boat.

Jesus was both a friend and a houseguest. And it was not really much of a favor. So the Savior got in the boat with Simon. Then Peter pushed it off and rowed a few feet from the shore where all the people stood.

As Jewish teachers always did, Jesus sat down. Then He continued the lesson He had begun on the shore. The words were rich and warmed Peter like the rising sun. They were a spiritual salve that soothed his soul.

There is something grand and glorious in that simple scene. It is always exciting and exhilarating when the infinite and all-powerful God chooses to use frail and faltering human beings.

Sometimes, the Spirit of God asks us for something we own or something we can do. But He never at the beginning. First, our Lord always asks for our lives: for our bodies and our minds. That was the invitation Paul relayed to the believers at Rome.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, Romans 12:1 (NKJV)*

Only after we have willingly made that commitment does our newfound Friend feel free to ask for our help. He asks us if He can use our treasure, our talents, and our time.

Jesus used Peter's boat to bless a multitude of people who were hungry for God's Word. And He will do the same with us.

Jesus wants to bring peace and joy, serenity and satisfaction to people in darkness and despair. And He would use our bodies, our minds, our abilities, and our possessions to do so.

From the very beginning, Peter understood what many churchgoers today do not. He knew it was a high and holy privilege to serve the Savior. His little boat would forever be blessed because the Son of the living God sat and spoke in it. And so would he.

No matter what the Master might ask of us, we must never forget that serving Him is neither an obligation nor a responsibility. It is always a marvelous, matchless privilege.

When we serve at the Redeemer's request, even the most mundane task is a treasured and eternal honor.

## *Compliance*

Simon's shoulders were sore and his back ached from pulling in empty nets all night. But as he listened to the Savior speak, he forgot all about how tired he was.

And almost before he knew it, Jesus was finished, and the crowd was drifting off. Then the Master looked at the fisherman and smiled.

*When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Verse 4*

Earlier, Christ asked to use Peter's boat. But this was not a request. It was a command. And like most of God's commands, it included a sweet fragrance of promise.

Peter was to row farther out on the lake where the bottom plunged down dark depths. The lake was very deep there. And even on the hottest day, the waters were cool and dark.

Peter had great awe and admiration for his Friend. His mother-in-law had been sick for years. But now she was so fit, she was well enough to help with housework. All because of Jesus.

So the fisherman was more than willing to do as his Friend asked. He was eager to do so.

Still, working wonders is wonderful. So are preaching and teaching. And no one was better at all of that than Jesus. But this command had to do with fishing. And when it came to fishing, Simon was the expert.

*And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." Verse 5 (ESV)*

Simon was not shy about it; he was open and honest. He was a master fisherman and he had caught nothing. What chance did Jesus have?

The splendid days Peter spent following Jesus in Judea were not wasted. The big fisherman had learned an important lesson. He learned what faith and obedience are all about.

So Simon told Jesus he would do as the Master asked. But not because Peter had any expectation of success. He was quite sure he knew much more about fishing than his Friend. And he knew it would do no good.

But at His word, just because Christ commanded him to row out on the lake where the water was deep, Peter would do so. And simply because the Savior had told him to, Simon would let down his nets.

Peter knew he could not call Christ his Friend and refuse to do what He said. And neither can we. Jesus said so.

*You are My friends if you do what I command you. John 15:14*

We are to obey God's Word even when we disagree. It does not make any difference if we are sure we know better or if we are completely convinced it is a waste of time. Even when we have no expectation of a shred of success, we are still to do as our God commands.

And we are to do so for one reason and one reason only. We are to obey because the Lord we love has commanded us to do so.

That is the only motive that matters.

## *Confession*

Simon's arms ached from a long night of labor. But he rowed out to where the depth painted the water a deep purple. Then he swished his nets down into the water.

At first, he thought the cord mesh had snagged on something down on the bottom of the lake. But then the net budged. So Peter pulled harder.

And soon the water began to boil with flopping fish. Simon had fished the lake all his life. Yet he had never seen so many fish. It was the catch of his life. And all because he obeyed Christ.

*When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. Verses 6-7*

Our God never does anything with only one aim in mind. His motives are a web of interwoven plans and purposes. And so it was with the great catch of fish Christ gave Peter.

But one of the Master's motives was simplicity itself. Jesus had used Peter's boat. So He felt he owed Simon. He had occupied his time and demanded effort and exertion when the fisherman was weary.

Do not be misled. Peter neither asked nor secretly expected to be paid. Simon was more than merely glad to help Jesus. He considered it an honor. And so it was. It is always an honor to serve our Savior.

That is how our Lord expects us to look upon serving Him. Nevertheless, He still insists of paying us.

Our God always pays and pays richly. He pours His blessings into the lives of those who serve selflessly, lovingly, and obediently.

Our loving Lord paid Peter for allowing Him to use his boat by giving Simon so many fish, two fishing boats were almost sunk by the weight of the catch. And He will bless us every bit as richly when we serve Him.

At first, Peter was worried that his nets might tear. Then he fretted that his boat would sink. But a moment later all those concerns were overshadowed by an overwhelming awe.

Suddenly, Simon realized just who his Friend really was. He was not merely a miracle working Master or a Rabbi with riveting words. He was and is and ever shall be the Lord of glory Himself.

*But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Verse 8*

Peter felt as Moses did when the great lawgiver was still a simple, desert shepherd. Seeing the burning bush and hearing the voice of God, Moses overwhelmed with awe.

*Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:6*

Our God is Light. And in that light we see ourselves as we really are. So when Isaiah was in the presence of God, he felt just as Simon did.

*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Isaiah 6:5*

For the first time in his life, Peter saw himself clearly. And he felt utterly unworthy to be in the presence of his God, let alone serve Him.

That attitude cannot be manufactured or mimicked. But it is essential if we are to serve the Savior. We must never forget who we are and what we are without the purifying, empowering presence of His Spirit.

Of course, Peter did not really want Jesus to go away. Quite the contrary, he was merely filled with fear and overcome by the presence of One so pure and perfect, One so grand and glorious.

But was Peter really what he said he was: a sinful man? Without a doubt, but so are we. Indeed we are infinitely more sinful than Simon ever was. We are unholy and utterly unworthy to serve so great a God.

And we must not be too proud to pour out our hearts and confess it all to Him. We must not only see ourselves as we are. We must also admit it.

### *Commitment*

When Peter saw all the fish flopping in his net, he could hear the cords beginning to snap. So he waved wildly, urging the fishermen he had left behind on the shore to come and help him.

But when they arrived and all the fish were heaped in the boat, a larger problem loomed. There were so many fish, both boats were weighed so far down into the water they were in danger of being flooded.

So Peter was not alone in his fears. Andrew, John and James felt the same way. They all realized it was a miracle catch. And the Master was more than a miracle worker. He was God in human flesh.

*For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Verses 9-10*

Step by step, the Savior led Simon into a life-changing relationship. He began by inviting him to consecrate himself to Christ. Then He demanded that Peter trust Him so much he would willingly obey, not on the basis of wisdom or assured success. But upon His Word alone.

Finally, Jesus allowed Peter to personally experience His power. That made Peter fall to his knees, overcome by an overawing realization of his wickedness and unworthiness.

Now Peter and his fellow fisherman were finally ready to follow Jesus. They were candidates for Christ's call.

*And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." Verse 10*

Christ's call was very specific. Yes, Simon was not worthy to be in the presence of God. And neither are we. He was weak and wicked and unworthy to serve the Savior in the smallest way. And so are we.

But Peter was not to serve out of fear. And neither are we. We are to share the glorious, good news of the life and joy and peace that comes with knowing and loving and serving Jesus Christ.

But we are not to do so because we are afraid of Savior who shed His blood for us. Neither are we to live in dread of our eternal Abba: our kind and compassionate heavenly Father.

Ours is to be a labor of love. We are to obey out of love, give out of love, worship out of love, and serve out of love. And love alone.

And our service is indeed to catch men. Not as a spear fisherman impales a fish, but as a net fisherman pulls a fish out of the water, alive and alert. We are to pull men out of sin into the open air of God's great love and Christ's forgiveness.

When Peter, Andrew, James and John got to the shore and pulled their boats up out of the water, everyone crowded around. They had never seen so many fish. But the fishermen did not seem to care.

*When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. Verse 11*

They did not decide to give serving the Savior a try that morning. No, they made a permanent decision. From that moment on, they would serve Jesus and Jesus alone.

It was a complete commitment too. They did not even take the time to hang up their nets or dry dock their boats to keep the wood from rotting.

Amazingly, they did not even bother to take the catch of their lives to the fish market to sell. They left behind a rich reward to rot on the shore.

They did so for the same reason Paul left behind a life of learning and honor, of wealth and position.

*...whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, Philippians 3:7-8*

Like Paul, those fishermen left absolutely everything behind to follow Jesus Christ. And they did so for the very same reason.

Next to the grace and glory of God's Son and compared to His life and light, everything they ever treasured looked like trash. And they could not imagine going back to their old lives.

All that mattered was Jesus. He was all they had, all they wanted, and all they needed in this life.

*Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

*Psalm 73:25-26*

There was no reluctance in their commitment. They did not put their hand to the plow and look back longingly at what they left behind. No, they left everything because everything was nothing.

It was the first day of forever. And only Jesus mattered.