



Luke 5:1–7

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished

speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ 5 Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

Reflection

Chances are that as you’re listening to this talk you’re most likely on the way to work. That’s because pretty much everyone spends the greater part of their life

working. And it has always been this way. In fact, pre-1940, we worked 6-day weeks, not five, and that extends right back to the pattern God modelled for us at the beginning of Genesis. Humankind has always worked, and always will work because that is how we've been made.

And so by extension, our work is clearly very important to God, otherwise he would not have ordained that the greater part of human civilisation spend the greater part of their lives, their best years, working.

Have you ever stopped to think that your average Christian spends around 2% of their waking hours in church and most of the rest of them at work? When we're not sleeping, we spend most of our time working. And yet so often our teaching

in church concentrates on the 2% of our waking hours that we spend in church to the neglect of the single greatest preoccupation of our lives – our work. And this means that many Christians have great difficulty relating Sunday to Monday.

So it's important to note that Jesus Christ spent the greater part of his life on earth, perhaps as much as 25 years, working with his hands as a carpenter. 25 years lugging timber, hammering nails into wood, supporting his family as the eldest son after his father Joseph died, making ends meet like the rest of us; and then just 3 years of public ministry before his death. As you travel to work this morning with the usual frustrations and fatigue, know that Jesus did too, for 25 years. I also love that Jesus' disciples were working class people,

most of them fishermen. Not the professionally religious: rabbis, teachers of the law, or priests – but fishermen. The mission of God in the hands of ordinary people.

Today Jesus enters the workplace of Peter, a small business owner and fisherman. Let's see what unfolds in Luke 5:1–7,

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If you were to travel to Palestine today there is a natural amphitheatre situated halfway between Capernaum and Tabgha, where the land slopes gently down to a

natural bay. Israeli scientists have verified that this bay can transmit a human voice effortlessly to several thousand people on shore. Now of course, we have no way of knowing if this is the exact place that today's passage occurred some 2,000 years ago but we can imagine the scene. Tired fishermen, in a foul mood having fished all night and caught nothing, cleaning their long drag nets of silt and seaweed by the lakeside.

Jesus recognises one of the fishermen as Simon Peter from the synagogue, whom he had lunch with after healing his mother-in-law. And here is the solution to Jesus' problem. The great crowd is not only straining to hear him, but the press of the crowd is forcing Jesus right to the water's edge so Jesus asks Peter (who can hardly

say 'no' given his mother-in-law's healing) to push one of the boats back out to shore so that Jesus can continue to preach to them.

Presumably Jesus continues to preach and the surly fisherman continue to untangle and clean their nets, brooding over a whole night's work with absolutely nothing to show for it, only now their embarrassment extends to a huge crowd of people who also can very clearly see that they hadn't managed to catch a single thing. Then, verse 4,

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

Perhaps you're a fisherman, or you have a keen fisherman in the family. If so you'll know the frustration that failure brings. The perfect spot, the perfect gear, the perfect bait, hours on end and nothing! Coming home smelling of fish, without a single fish. And failure repeated over and over at the behest of all those innocent enquirers asking about the trip. And so, we need not ask what goes through the mind of a professional fisherman in a foul mood when a non-fisherman orders him to do again in bad conditions what he has already tried and failed to do in good conditions. We can hear the strain in Peter's voice,

Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.

... but he does owe the man ...

But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

... and get them dirty all over again, for the same result, but he did heal my mother-in-law, and his preaching of God's word is like nothing I've ever seen or heard before so the boys and I will let them down again, just for a little while, out of courtesy, perhaps he'll use them empty again to make a point in his next sermon. And so Jesus, using his boat as a pulpit, has Peter, his brother Andrew, and his partners James and John (as we read from the other Gospels), reluctantly let down their nets, and as we'll see tomorrow what results does provide Jesus with a powerful sermon illustration. Verse 6,

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

It's almost a comedic scene. Disgruntled fishermen all of a sudden whooping and laughing and scurrying all about the place, diving into the water, for a once-in-a-lifetime haul that has come out of nowhere. Fish jumping out of the water left, right and centre, the water broiling with activity, and a huge crowd on the shoreline moments before having been eyeing the empty nets now staring in amazement at nets filled to breaking point and boats almost sinking

under the load.

Think & Pray

We'll explore Jesus' miracle and its effect on Peter tomorrow, but for today consider again Jesus, the carpenter, calling Peter, Andrew, James and John – four fishermen – to be his first disciples. The mission of God in the hands of ordinary people, ordinary people like you and I.

And did you note that Jesus begins Peter's journey of discipleship not by calling him away from his profession, but by challenging him to bolder practice of it? Peter, Andrew, James and John will shortly leave everything for Jesus and enter into full-time ministry but the vast majority of lives in Luke-Acts that Jesus touches will take up the

mission of God by staying in their day jobs. And for most Christians this is where Jesus would have us exercise our obedience to him. God, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that the greater part of his followers will spend the greater part of their lives at work for a reason. Our work is the avenue in which God would have us bring him glory – by working hard, as if we were working directly for him. By doing good, so that his common grace might touch all and continue to renew our world. By sharing our faith with colleagues who've come to respect us and value our friendship.

And so pray for your workplace this morning. Pray that God would reveal to you why he has placed you there and what you might do today at work to further his kingdom in our world.