

• A story only recorded by Luke

• Peter a fisherman from Bethsaida

Luke 5:1–11 has a story which is not in the other gospels. Luke 4:31–44 is very similar to Mark 1:21–39, and Luke 5:12–6:11 follows Mark 1:40–3:6. But the story in Luke 5:1–11 is found only in Luke's Gospel.

Jesus had already met Peter and some of the other disciples. Shortly after the time of Jesus' being baptised He had met Simon and had given him the name Cephas or Peter ^{□1}. Now it is several months later and Jesus has come to preach in Bethsaida where Peter, one of His potential workers, has a fishing business. It is a village on the shores of Lake Galilee. Mark tells the story of Jesus' calling them to ministry ^{□2}. Luke does not use that story but he inserts this one in Luke 5:1–11 as an equivalent. It must have taken place at about the same time.

□1 John 1:35–40

□2 Mark 1:16–20

1. Peter sees a display of Jesus' lordship

• An overwhelmingly large catch

1. **Peter sees a display of Jesus' lordship.** Jesus was preaching by the shores of Lake Galilee ^{□1}. Some fishermen were nearby ^{□2}. The crowd was pressing upon Jesus so He borrowed Peter's boat, put out to sea a little way, and used the boat as a platform on which to stand as He was preaching ^{□3}. After the preaching had finished Jesus suggested that Peter should take the boat further out into deeper waters and try catching some fish ^{□4}. Peter was sceptical ^{□5} but he did what Jesus said and the result was that he caught an overwhelmingly large catch of fish ^{□6}.

□1 5:1
□2 5:2

□3 5:3

□4 5:4
□5 5:5
□6 5:6-7

• A many sided lesson for Peter

It was a many-sided lesson for Peter. It showed Peter that Jesus was not only a man with a message from God ^{□1}; He was also a man whose word was followed by signs of power. It also showed Peter that great and abundant blessing would come if he simply followed Jesus' instructions. Jesus lordship was not just in the realm of spiritual teaching. He was the Lord of fish as well as Lord in the spiritual realm. Every part of God's creation obeys the Lord's commands and achieves His will.

□1 5:1

2. Peter is made to feel his own great sinfulness

2. **Peter is made to feel his own great sinfulness.** Peter's experience of Jesus' amazing power brings him face to face with the supernatural. He reacts in the way in which we all react when we are suddenly faced with the reality of God. He immediately thinks of his sinfulness.

We all feel this way when suddenly God does something that forces us to realise that He is alive, that He is near at hand, and that He is likely to take action in our lives. A sense of God's presence creates fear and a consciousness of our wickedness. It makes things come back to our minds that we thought we had forgotten. So great can be the sense of our own sinfulness that our first reaction is to feel that it is quite impossible that we could ever be used by God. Surely, we feel, God must punish us. He cannot possibly bless us. It is this kind of feeling that makes Peter say 'Depart from me . . . I am a sinful man' ^{□1}. Peter feels too sinful to be able to serve God.

□1 5:8

• Too sinful to serve God?

3. Peter experiences God's call despite his own unworthiness

- No words of condemnation from Jesus - 'Don't be afraid' he says

- Not rejection but a call to active work in His kingdom

4. Peter's future ministry is defined as a new kind of fishing

- 'Catching people' is at the heart of the work of the Church of Jesus Christ

- Christians are fisherfolk!

3. Peter experiences God's call despite his own unworthiness.

One might think that Jesus would reply to Peter, 'Yes you are indeed a sinful man...'. But not one word of rebuke comes from Jesus' lips. When we confess our sinfulness, Jesus does not hold it against us. Peter is harder on himself than Jesus is. The others who were with Peter felt the same way, including James and John [☒]¹. But the only thing that Jesus says is 'Do not be afraid...'. Many, many times in the Bible the people of God are told not to be afraid. The angel said the same thing to Zacharias [☒]² and to Mary [☒]³. Jesus would tell the disciples 'Fear not, little flock...' [☒]⁴. Our sense of sinfulness, our repeated failure, and the sense of how far we have yet to go in the pathway of godliness, all contribute to make our sense of sinfulness oppressive at times. When in some way we are confronted with God we feel almost like despairing. But God does not feel the same way. When we are ready to condemn ourselves, He is far from wishing to condemn us. 'Don't be afraid...', He says.

Not only is Jesus not about to reject Peter, He actually still wants Peter for active work in His kingdom.

4. Peter's future ministry is defined as a new kind of fishing. 'From now on you shall catch people', says Jesus [☒]¹. There is a sense in which Peter's old job and Peter's new work in the kingdom of Jesus are very similar. He has been a fisherman before; he will be a fisherman again, of people. All Christian ministry starts with bringing newcomers to the salvation that God offers us. The fisherman's great concern is to catch fish. What is the use of being a fisherman if you never catch fish? The more the better. Something similar is true in the work of God. Christian ministry has to start with bringing people into the kingdom of God. There is no Christian church without Christian people. The numbers in the Church of God have to be retained and expanded. It only takes a few years not bothering with outreach and any section of the Church which is careless in that way will find itself severely deteriorated. 'Catching people' is at the heart of the work of the Church of Jesus Christ. Peter is soon to be an apostle. He will be the preacher on the Day of Pentecost. He will be the founder of churches. He will write pages of the Bible – 1 and 2 Peter.

But the heart and centre of his work is fishing for people. The world is the sea. The gospel is the net. Christians are fisherfolk!

[☒]¹ 5:9-10a

[☒]² 1:13
[☒]³ 1:30
[☒]⁴ 12:32

[☒]¹ 5:10

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