

Peter's Miraculous Fish Story **Luke 5:1-11**

¹ One time, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. ² He saw two boats there along the lakeshore. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. ³ Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. He sat down and began teaching the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered him, "Master, we worked hard all through the night and caught nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets were about to tear apart. ⁷ They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." ⁹ For Peter and all those with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people." ¹¹ After they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

In my younger years, a buddy and I went on a fishing trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. It was such a relaxing vacation. We had an entire lake to ourselves. It was on this trip that I caught the biggest fish of my life. We were trolling along in a canoe, when my line got snagged. At least I thought it was a snag. All of a sudden my line took off. On the other end was a 30-inch Northern. That fish seemed to pull our canoe around in circles. I don't consider myself much of a fisherman. By the grace of God and with the help of my buddy's fishing net, we were able to get the fish into our canoe. That fish story is true. We know that some fish stories tend to stretch the truth a bit. The one that got away seems to get bigger and bigger each time we tell the story.

The portion of God's Word before us tells of a fishing story like none other. We know this story is true because it is found on the pages of Holy Scripture. It's the miraculous catch that Peter and his companions took in one day. That miraculous fish story left a lasting impression on Peter and the others with him. God willing, it will leave a lasting impression on us as we study it. May the Holy Spirit show us in Peter's fish story just how powerful the word of God is. May he show us how that word will change our life.

Jesus' word had power in the lives of people who first listened to him. The Gospel writer Luke shows us how true that is as he mentioned an occasion when people had gathered around Jesus to hear him preach. They had crowded around him while he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. We know that body of water better as the Sea of Galilee. The crowd that gathered had become so large that Jesus was unable to effectively teach them all. So he looked around and found a solution. There by the water's edge were two empty boats. Luke tells us, "*Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. He sat down and began teaching the crowds from the boat.*" Using Peter's boat as his pulpit or lectern, Jesus found a way to effectively share his powerful word with even more people.

When Jesus was done teaching the people, he decided to direct his powerful word specifically at Peter. This wasn't the first time that Peter had met Jesus. Jesus had earlier called Peter to follow him. In the section of Scripture preceding our text, Luke tells of the time that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. The reason Peter was still fishing for a living and not sitting at Jesus' feet everyday, is because Jesus had not yet called him to be a full-time disciple. But that would soon change.

First Jesus needed to teach Peter a lesson in fishing. He told Peter, *"Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch."* Peter certainly didn't need any lessons in fishing. That was his livelihood. Besides the fish were not biting for him that day. Peter informed our Lord, *"Master, we worked hard all through the night and caught nothing."* To this professional fisherman who knew the right time of day and the best parts of the lake to go, it probably didn't make much sense to go fish the way Jesus told him. But Peter went anyway. And he tells Jesus why: *"But at your word I will let down the nets."* Because you say so... Peter showed that Jesus' word had power in his life.

Because you say so. Those are such simple words. But they pretty much explain why we Christians do the things we do. The Lord blesses us with a new baby. But there's something wrong with our child, at least spiritually speaking. The child is spiritually blind, spiritually dead in transgressions. He or she came into this world as an enemy of God. So we gather family and friends together to baptize the child. Through that simple act our child is born again of water and the Spirit. He or she is now one of God's dearly loved children and an heir of eternal life. Why do we believe that? It's because God says so: *Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body but the guarantee of a good conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21).* You want to be completely sure that your sins are forgiven. So you come to a special meal offered at church. You eat a thin wafer of bread and take a sip of wine. You only taste bread and wine. But you are told that the same body of Jesus that bore your sins on the cross is present in that wafer. And the blood that stained his cross is in the wine. It doesn't make sense. So why do we believe that? It's because Jesus says so: *"This is my body... This is my blood."* And because Jesus says so, we walk away completely cleansed of all sin. Where do we find confidence to lie down in a hospital bed, or lie on an operating table, or even to lie for a long, long time in a coffin six feet underground? It's all in the words of Jesus. He promised he will be with me always. He told me that nothing can separate me from God's love. He assured me that all things work out for my eternal good. I know it. I believe it, because Jesus says so. His word has power in my life too.

It had power in Peter's life. Maybe to an experienced fishermen it didn't make sense to go out at the wrong time of day and in the wrong part of the lake. But they went anyway. And did it ever pay off. Luke tells us, *"They caught a great number of fish, and their nets were about to tear apart. They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink."* What a miracle! It was the catch of a lifetime.

They had never experienced anything like it. Peter's miraculous fish story shows what power Jesus' word has. It shows how his word can change a life.

It certainly changed Peter's life. Luke tells us, *"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord."* Peter and his partners had worked real hard to get that miraculous catch of fish into their boats before the nets broke. As they caught their breath, they marveled at the miraculous catch that filled both boats. Peter looked at the fish. Then he looked at Jesus. Then it hit him. Peter had no business being in the same boat with his Lord. His powerful word and this display of glory convinced Peter that Jesus is God himself. Now Peter realized how unworthy he was to be in The tax collector in Jesus' story who could not even look up to heaven. Instead he begged God to have mercy on his soul. In this boat we see the same unworthiness in Peter.

Peter fell at the right knees to find forgiveness. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn Peter, but to save him. Jesus gave Peter and his companions what was missing in their life. They needed holiness to be God's children. In Jesus they had all the holiness they needed. They needed God's forgiveness for all their sins. Jesus came to bring that as well. He would win them God's forgiveness by dying on a cross. He'd remove their guilt forever. Peter made the greatest catch of his life that day. It wasn't the fish that filled their boats. It was Jesus. Jesus not only changed hearts with his saving word. He changed lives forever.

As Jesus forgave Peter, he comforted him with a promise. *"Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people."* Luke tells us of the life changing effect: *After they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.* Sometimes an athlete will retire following a great accomplishment in a career, like a championship win. Following the greatest catch of their professional careers, fishermen Peter, James and John moved on to greater waters. They left everything—their boats, their nets, the fish—everything to follow Jesus. Jesus offered them a chance for an even greater catch. They'd now catch souls. And our Lord supplied them with the greatest net—the gospel. Luke tells of a great catch of souls in his book of Acts. On Pentecost Sunday, using the net of the gospel and filled with the Spirit of God, Peter and the others caught 3,000 souls for God's kingdom that day. Their fishing days never really ended. They only got better. It's because Jesus' word had changed their lives.

Has Jesus' word changed your life? Maybe you can't see it, but it has. In my ministry I've witnessed God's powerful word change people's lives. Once they got a bite of God's gospel, they never let go. Maybe it started for you when you were a tiny baby. God gospel net caught you in the waters of holy. baptism. Maybe there was a time in your life when a terrible sin caught you. You took it to your Lord in prayer and he forgave you. He always does because of Jesus. You want to get to know Jesus better. So you turn to God's Word daily and watch that powerful word change your life. If you learn anything from Peter's miraculous fish story, may it be that we are willing to drop everything to follow him. Follow him on the pages of his powerful word, and watch your life change miraculously.