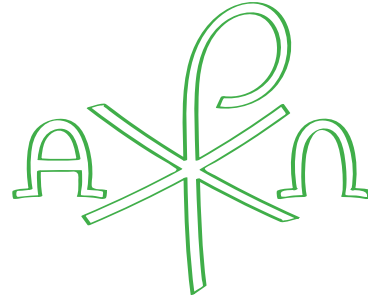


THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Derrick C. Brown



Luke 5:1–11 ESV

Author and Date:

Luke the Evangelist around AD 55–60. This miraculous event takes place shortly after Jesus begins His public ministry (Luke 4:14–15).

¹ **On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.**

- In a previous verse, the Evangelist records these words of Christ: “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” (Luke 4:43) This account is a manifestation of that Word. Jesus is out and about, preaching the Gospel, fulfilling His office of Prophet.
- The Lord of all creation is speaking life and salvation, yet Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen appear to be too busy wrapping up their workday to hear what He is saying, tending to their nets rather than giving attention to His Word.

³ **Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.**

- We don’t know what Jesus said in that sermon, but we don’t have to look far to make an educated guess. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17c) “Why do you worry about what you will eat? Your heavenly Father knows what you need.” (Matthew 6:25, 32b) “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you.” (John 6:27 NKJV) “Man [shall] not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Deuteronomy 8:3) “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) “Blessed are [you] poor, for [yours]

is the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 5:3) “Blessed are [you] who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for [you] shall be [filled].” (Matthew 5:6) Jesus’ preaching never changes, for His Word is unchangeable. He would be calling the crowds to repentance and faith in the same way He calls us to repent of fearing, loving, and trusting in anyone or anything other than our heavenly Father. In this preaching, faith is engendered, for it is by the hearing of the Word that faith is born and sustained. (Romans 10:17)

⁴ **And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”**

- “Labor and hope. God desires these two things from us. This is why He says to Peter, ‘Put out into the deep and cast out your net,’ as if to say, ‘Do what is required of fishermen. Labor and hope, and let Me see to your sustenance.’” (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 258).

⁵ **And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!**

- Man’s best efforts always fall short. The men were raised fisherman, but their strong arms and all their expertise could not fill their nets. Of and by themselves, they could do nothing. Their best efforts yielded only empty nets, and worse than that, the nets were dirty from use and had to be washed. After a full night’s work, they were going home without food to sustain them or their families.

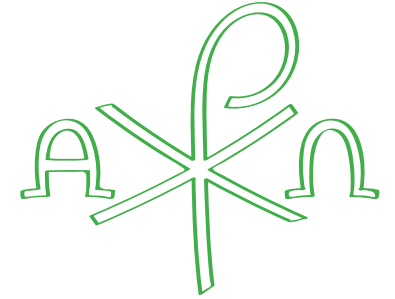
But at your word I will let down the nets.”

- What the disciples could not do, Jesus did with a Word. Their works availed nothing; His Word surpassed their understanding. At the Lord’s command, the hopelessness of sore backs and empty nets gave way to the greatest catch of fish they’d ever seen. Had they remained in Galilee, they surely would have been famous.

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⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

- There's a marvelous little parallel going on in this Gospel: just as the Word of Christ drew the fish into the net so that they pressed upon the net and the boat, so it was that, when He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, the people, we are told, pressed upon Him, to hear the Word of God. (v. 1). That's when He asked Simon to launch out his ship a little from land, so that He could teach them from the water because there were so many pressing upon Him. (v. 3). See, then, the effect of Jesus' Word; the outcome of His preaching: the people were pressing upon Him. His Word alone has such power, for by it, He brings all men into the boat—the holy Christian Church.
- Fish die when caught. But the Gospel net brings men out of death and into life eternal. By His Word, you were drawn from the waters of the Font alive, reborn, forgiven, and into the Ark of the Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. The Net of the Gospel never breaks — men are saved by believing until the Church is complete.

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

- Simon's conscience had opened up, so that he became aware of his sins — his lack of fear, love, and trust in God.

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

- It wasn't just to show off that Jesus performed this miracle of drawing the fish into the net. It wasn't just to demonstrate the power of His Word, though it was that much. It was to illustrate something greater. And just as, by the Word of Christ, the net brought so many fish that it could not contain them, so now by the preaching of Simon and his fellows would the fish of the world, that is, people of the world, be brought in to the net of the holy Christian Church alone by that power. As the Catechism teaches us to confess: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. [Even as] He calls, gathers, enlightens,

and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." (SC. II: 3). That's how it works. It's not by gimmicks. It's not by catchy melodies. It's not by changing the liturgy to be more user-friendly to the culture. It's not by the best laid plans of men, who try to make things just so to bring people into the Church by their best efforts. It is in spite of man's best efforts that the fish of the world are drawn into the net and that men are drawn into the Church. It is in spite of us, not because of us. It is because of the almighty Word of Christ and that Word alone.

- There are two basic vocations within the Church: There are fishermen, and there are fish. Or, to put it another way, there is the office of preacher and the office of hearer; those called to open their mouths and preach and those called to open their ears, hear, and believe. God sends pastors out with His Word to be fishermen, to cast the net of the Gospel and bring people into the boat of the Church. Those who hear are the fish.

¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

- Simon and his fellow fishermen did not haul the bounty back to town to feed their families and sell at market. They forsook (NKJV) that miraculous catch. So too did they leave behind their boats, their livelihoods, because the miraculous catch was never about the fish. It was always about the God who commands the wind and the sea (Luke 8:25g; Mark 4:41b-c), the God who said: "Let there be light," and there was light (Genesis 1:3), the God who said: "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures" (Genesis 1:20)... and it was so, the God who took on Flesh (John 1:14a) and stood before them and beckoned them to follow Him.



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