



## 9. Trust and Obey (Luke 5:1-11)

Last week we saw how Jesus started to demonstrate the prophecy foretold of Him in Isaiah by preaching with authority, by casting out demons and by healing the sick. We saw the way in which there was a hunger in Capernaum for His teaching. There they were on the shores of Lake Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee) crowding around. It seemed more convenient from the point of view of crowd control for Jesus to use Simon's boat as a pulpit and pushed just offshore.

As before, nothing appears out of a vacuum. Jesus already knew the boat's owners. Fishermen had quite a high profile in Galilean society as their business was more potentially lucrative than farming. Theirs was an important industry at that time and fishermen usually worked in family-related gangs and owned the boat between them. Simon and Andrew had James and John the sons of Zebedee as partners.

Jesus knew Andrew and Simon whose boat he was now borrowing. What we know about Simon is that he and his brother Andrew were from Bethsaida, a fishing village on the northern edge of the lake so they were locals. John's gospel (chapter 1) relates that Andrew first met Jesus when he was a disciple of John the Baptist. He was introduced as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As a result he introduced Simon to Jesus and at that point Jesus gives him the nickname, Peter - the name he is known by for the rest of his life.

Introductions over, a friendship had started, but it was not yet discipleship - which was a much closer bond with a rabbi in those days than a mere friendship. A disciple came under the authority of the rabbi, to be taught, get closer to God and serve the rabbi's needs. The rabbi was always "Master" or "Lord". It was a trust relationship. The disciple placed himself under the authority of the rabbi because he believed that the rabbi was a man of God who would bring his followers closer to God.

By the time Jesus visits Simon's house in Capernaum in chapter 4 and heals his mother-in-law, Jesus was visiting a friend, not a disciple. In chapter 5, their relationship now changed after the incident we read this morning.

There is a big difference between knowing about Jesus and following Jesus. Simon (and Andrew) had that expectation that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - the Messiah. He had heard Jesus speak. He'd seen the miracles. The mental assent was there. But it didn't commit him far enough to be a disciple.

There are a lot of people in the world who believe Jesus is the Son of God. They believe that Jesus died and rose again and all the rest of it. But that's it. They have never placed all of their trust in Him. That was Simon. Jesus was a great guy to be acquainted with. The miracles were great - and of course He could have the lend of the boat any time. But follow Jesus? That was just a step too far until the day Jesus borrowed his boat.

The same is true of people today. You might believe all that stuff. But are you truly following Jesus? Simon knew Jesus but he had not given up his day job. And that made him no different from anyone else. Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Yes? Then you're in good company because the demons believe Jesus is the Son of God too. There's a huge difference between belief and trust; knowing and following. Being a Christian isn't just an assent to facts. It's making Him Lord by placing Him in authority over your life. And to do that, you must trust Him implicitly. There is a huge difference between knowing about Jesus and trusting Him. Becoming a Christian means becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

This passage tells us quite a lot about what trusting Jesus is all about.

- Trust gets you to heaven

So here was Simon - a guy who was interested in Jesus. Happy to make His acquaintance because He seemed to be such an amazing guy. After Jesus was speaking, Jesus tells Simon to put the boat out for a big catch. Simon protests at first because the fish had not been biting the previous evening. But he obeys. Why? He already had seen the blessings Jesus brings and so it was worth giving Jesus a try even though he wasn't sure about the outcome.

Faith in Christ begins when we start to trust. When we base actions on the fact of who He is, even though we are doing so on the basis of something implausible. That's the nature of faith. It isn't based on fact, but listening to God and acting upon God's word, however unlikely that is. We may have past experience of God acting in amazing ways or perhaps not. Peter was an experienced fisherman. He was not going to get a good catch that time of the day. But he was prepared to trust Jesus anyway. After all, his mother in law had been healed. His trust now was a simple act. Throwing his nets over for a catch. What happened? The catch was massive - just as Jesus said.

Can I ask you a question? If you were to die tonight, would you be sure that you are going to heaven? Would you be confident enough to know that you are so acceptable to God that He will let you in? Are you sure that Jesus' death on the cross has bought you that.

If you are sure and that is your hope and expectation then you are trusting Jesus because all you have is His word for it. But for me, His word is good enough - as it is for most of you. Let me give you an illustration.

Let's say you're going to catch the coach from Swaffham to London. You arrive bleary eyed at 8-15 and there it is, parked up and loading. But is it the right bus. You speak to someone with a case and they say it is. You still dither. You look at the sign on the front. It says Victoria Coach Station - is that THE Victoria Coach Station. You still dither. You speak to the driver who says he's going to London and tells you to hop on. But you still dither. The doors hiss close and off the bus goes. It doesn't matter how many assurances you get it's the right one and how convinced you are it's the right coach. Unless you actually put your trust in the word of the driver, passengers or destination board, you're going nowhere - you'll miss the bus.

There is a difference between believe and trust. You may believe the coach is going to London, but you won't get there until you get aboard. Are you aboard God's Express this morning - or are you going to be left at the bus stop? Step on board before it's too late.

- Trust opens you to the power of God

*They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled 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. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*

Because Simon was prepared to trust Jesus and drop the nets for the catch, I wonder what was going through Simon's head? There had been no fish the night before. So there certainly wouldn't be any there now. It was impossible - but he heard Jesus' voice and trusted Him and saw His awesome power. He trusted and saw God at work in power.

What do you think about when you see manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In this story there's a miracle, but last week was all about demons and healings.

There are some people who say "unless I see a miracle, I will not believe". The Christian faith does not usually work like that. God speaks, you trust and then you see the miracle. In fact skeptics who say they will never believe unless they see a miracle still don't believe when they do. They'll try to dismiss it.

Does it make you uncomfortable when people talk about miracles today? It does many Christians because it is not their experience. Then maybe don't be afraid to be like Simon when it does happen, because when we count our blessings we find amazing things happen more often than we think. And what was Simon's response? He sees the "impossible" haul of fish, suddenly realises

how amazingly holy Jesus is and says *"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*- he felt sinful and inadequate. Do you feel somehow inadequate as a believer? Seeing God at work in power is not just for the "super-Christians". It's for everyone - but it starts when we listen for His voice and trust Jesus.

If we are not seeing manifestations of the presence and power of God in our lives and in answered prayer church, then we need to come back to the cross and trust Jesus afresh and realises that He still accepts us in our weakness and unbelief.

- Trust makes you productive.

Jesus desires that His disciples are productive. That's the standard condition for a disciple. We are called to be people-magnets - encouraging others to come to Christ and follow Him.

Are we? Jesus said "From now on you are going to catch men." In Matthew Jesus is recorded as saying *"I will make you fishers of men"* I will make you. How do fishermen catch fish? Look at the story. They cast their nets in at the right place and right time - in this case it was in Jesus' place at Jesus' time.

In the modern church we live in terror of mission or we fish fruitlessly. All Peter and Andrew did was to trust Jesus and obey Him. They did no differently than they had done on the previous night when they dropped their nets at Jesus' command. The difference was trusting that Christ make us fishers of men - we trust Him and do it in his time and space. Trust and obey. Why doesn't the catch come in? We're evangelicals; we preach the gospel? True but are we fishing with the right net in the right place. We need to become hearers of the voice of God when we come to pray, not just opening our mouths. I've started to encourage it here. Continue it, come closer to Jesus, and nurture that relationship with Him individually and corporately. Then the fish will come in by the net load. Discover where Jesus wants you to drop your nets and you get the haul. It's not rocket science you need to be fishers of men - it's Jesus.

- Trust means you obey.

One of the basic principles of Christianity is illustrated here. God's logic works backwards to human logic. As I've already said, in human terms, we want the miracle, then we'll trust. But God's way is that we start trusting and start moving and then watch the miracles. The reason why so many believers experience barren Christian lives is that they are there waiting for the miracle, but Jesus wants us to simply come. Here, Simon started by trusting Jesus with His boat and he got to hear some teaching.

The next step of faith was bigger - to cast nets to fish even though it was unlikely/impossible and they got the product. Jesus calls us to trust Him and obey Him. the more we trust, the more we act on responsibility given us, then the more we'll see the power of God and people come to Christ.

The cost of commitment for Simon and Andrew was leaving everything and following Jesus. To follow Jesus costs. Trusting and obeying made the difference. What do we need to lose to follow Jesus? Material things? Our pride? Our dyed in the wool ways? Our stubbornness to change? Our unwillingness to share the Gospel with others? Our unwillingness to break with the past?

A follower of Jesus Christ is called a disciple. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ this morning, then you are a learner of Him - a disciple. You make Him Lord and trust Him. You listen to His voice and obey Him.

When I was a teacher, I had different types of "disciple" in my classes. Some were willing learners, others couldn't be bothered. Those who were committed did well. Those that couldn't be bothered; why spend the time to work hard - it was all too much for them - and they never got the results. It isn't any different in God's classroom. If we want the blessings; if we want God's kingdom to advance; if we want to be healthy Christians - the message is this- trust and obey.

Reflect on your own life this morning as I read the following words:

**WHEN WE WALK WITH THE LORD**  
In the light of His word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will,  
He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey!

But we never can prove  
The delights of His love  
Until all on the altar we lay;  
For the favour He shows,  
And the joy He bestows,  
Are for those who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet  
We will sit at His feet,  
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;  
What He says we will do,  
Where He sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey!

*Trust and obey!*  
*For there's no other way*  
*To be happy in Jesus,*  
*But to trust and obey.*



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