

Sermon Lk 5:1-11

Intro/

'So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything – and followed Him.' Lk 5:11

Why did they do that? – What's been going on that's brought them to this momentous decision? What's it all about?

We need to go back a bit I think – perhaps a year – and then perhaps we'll begin to see how something that looks almost instantaneous – has actually been quite a gradual process.

You see, this is not the first time that Simon has met Jesus – It isn't even the first time that Jesus had invited them to follow Him – or the first time they'd gone with Him –

The first time was way back – just a couple of days after John the Baptist had been speaking about Jesus – John was talking to his disciples when he saw Jesus going by and he pointed Jesus out to them – and then 2 of John's disciples then went to spend the day with Jesus – one of these was Andrew – Andrew spent all day listening to Jesus and he was so excited with what he was hearing that he ran to get his brother – Simon – to tell him that he'd found the Messiah –

And Andrew took Simon to meet Jesus.

1/

Then a while after this, John the Baptist had been put in prison, and Jesus went to live in Capernaum – Capernaum is a little fishing town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee – and as He was walking beside the sea one day, Jesus came across both Simon and Andrew again – Simon and Andrew were in the shallows casting their nets, and Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow Me,' He said –

And they both went with Jesus – as did James and John, 2 more fishermen that were there and they all spent quite a time with Jesus – listening to Him teach – watching Him heal – seeing Him cast out demons. They'd also been with Him, to that wedding at Cana – and seen what He'd done with the water in those great big stone jars.

They'd even had Jesus in their homes – Simon, had a house in Capernaum, almost opposite the Synagogue and Jesus had often visited there after teaching in the Synagogue. And on one occasion He'd actually healed Simon's mother-in-law.

But then for some reason, they'd all drifted back to fishing – and to trying to earn a living again.

Now I don't know about you, but I can think of a few people that I've known who've done something similar –

They've been so close to Jesus and they've seen Him do amazing things in their own lives and even do amazing things through them – and then for some unknown reason, they've drifted away – and given it all up – and they've gone back to how they used to be – and done the things that they used to do –

And so Simon and Andrew, James and John have gone back to how they used to be – and they've gone back to fishing –

And so here they are – after an absolutely fruitless night at fishing – here they are, cleaning their empty nets – just getting rid of the seaweed and debris that's got tangled in them – and half listening to Jesus as He teaches on the shore.

2/

And Jesus was getting hemmed in – all around as the people crowded round Him and He had no-where else to go but backwoods – into the water—or, as it turns out – on the water –

or to be more precise – in a boat – or to be even more precise – into Simon's boat –

And v3 tells us that Jesus asked Simon to go out a little from the shore and then when Jesus had made Himself comfortable, He carried on teaching –

People would have heard Him better from out there as sound travels better over water, doesn't it?

Then v4 tells us that Jesus asked Simon to go further out – into the deep water – and to let down his nets for a catch –

Now, it's well into the day by now – probably hot too – and fish are mainly active in the cool of the night – that's why they fish at night – but there weren't any last night – their nets had been empty of fish –

And so you can almost feel Simon's frustration, can't you? – he just wants to get home to rest before going out again later but here's Jesus wanting to go fishing in the heat of the day – when the fish would all have been hiding in the depths of the sea –

And so he tells Jesus that he's tried all night and got nothing – but he seems to respect Jesus enough to humour Him, doesn't he? 'If you say so – then I will.' Simon says, and he gathers up all the nets again – even though it'll mean cleaning them all over again – and he piles them into his boat and puts out on the Sea of Galilee –

And we all know what happens next don't we?

There's this utterly unprecedented catch of fish! No-one's seen anything like it!

Last night when the fish should have been there – there weren't any –

And now when the fish should not be there – the lake is teaming with fish.

Sometime in the 1980's I think it was – archaeologists found a boat that was dated from around the time of Jesus and this boat was about 26ft long, 7 and a half ft wide and 4 and a half feet deep – not a small rowing boat by any means –

In fact, it's said that the average boat from back then could easily have been up to 30ft long.

Can you imagine just how much fish a boat like that would hold? 26 ft long – 7 and a half ft wide and 4 and a half ft deep!

And not just one boat full but 2 boats so full they began to sink –

3/

But do you know, this is not about the fish?

It's more about who this man Jesus is!

And what it would mean to follow Him! –

For Simon, the past year or so is starting to fall into place – and the penny is starting to drop – perhaps this man really is the Messiah – just like his brother Andrew had said about a year ago –

And in v 8 we read that he falls at Jesus' knees! –

'Go away from me,' he says, 'for I am a sinful man.'

It's as if, not only does Simon Peter see who Jesus really is – but he also sees himself – as he really is –

But Jesus knows all about Simon Peter and his past, whatever that was – and He still calls him.

You see following Jesus is not about our past – it's about our future – and taking that first step towards that future.

And our first steps are exactly the same as Simon's – to see who Jesus really is and to see ourselves as we really are – and to realise that we can't save ourselves – Jesus is the only One who can help us –

We can only go so far on our own and in our own strength – we need Jesus – Simon Peter needed Jesus and he found that Jesus cared about his day-to-day routine – and He understood his needs – and it's the same for us –

Jesus cares about every little, and not so little, aspect of our lives – the things that we do – that we're involved in – the situations that we go through – the relationships that we're part of –

and so Simon falls at Jesus knees – as he's overcome with the awe and wonder of it all.

And what does Jesus do?

He re-calls Simon – He gives Simon a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance to follow Him –

'Don't be afraid,' Jesus says, 'from now on you will catch men.'

And so we come to the verse that we started with –

'So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him.'

They left everything – and that wasn't just a few bits and bobs –

It was more like winning first prize in a roll-over- Lottery but not cashing in the ticket!

They left all that fish and the income it would have made – they left it all there – in the boats – on the shore – and they went off with Jesus!

And they never looked back – they spent the rest of the time with Jesus –

But Simon Peter had yet another hiccup, didn't he?

Before Jesus was crucified, he denied even knowing Jesus – never mind being one of His disciples!

And after the resurrection of Jesus – Simon Peter and the others, went back to fishing again –

But Jesus found them – and He gave them yet another chance to follow Him –

End/

You see, Jesus is the God of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 103<sup>rd</sup> chances –

Because He never gives up on us –

Whatever our past is – we can leave it behind over and over again and make that fresh start over and over again with Jesus –

This story today is not about the fish – as miraculous as that was – it's about Jesus!

And about leaving our past behind and following Jesus –

It doesn't matter whether it's our 1<sup>st</sup> time, 2<sup>nd</sup> time, 3<sup>rd</sup> time or 103<sup>rd</sup> time that Jesus has called us – because you see, Jesus still wants us on His team –

He still Has a plan and a purpose for each one of us –

None of us is ever redundant, or unwanted – or even retired – Following Jesus is forever –

And we can make that fresh start with Him over and over again.

If you have a past that you need to leave behind then can I suggest that you do that today –

Just like Simon and Andrew, James and John did –

And can I suggest that you walk into the future with Jesus.

This story is not about the miracle of the fish –

It's about leaving our past behind –

And about committing our future to Jesus --

