

Are you catching fish or cleaning nets?

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[0 : 00] If you've got a Bible, open it at Luke chapter 5 and follow with me through. It's been read to you already and we're going to have a look at this portion of Scripture.

Now here's the title to the message, Under the Umbrella, Life Worth Having. Are you catching fish or cleaning nets?

As you sit here this morning in this church building, enjoying the singing, worshipping, praising God, enjoying the friendship of one another, going through to have coffee in a few minutes time.

And today it's even blessed with some cake. Enjoying that together and just loving life. Are you catching fish or cleaning nets?

Far too many fishermen spend their days cleaning nets, never catching a fish. And you want to see a fisherman when he catches a fish.

[1 : 08] I mean when he catches it, he's going to tell you, he's going to show you how big it is, it's about so big, about, you know. They love talking and they hold it up, you know.

Or they pick it up or they put it in. We love it. That's fishing. Well are you as a Christian, as a believer in Christ, are you in your life catching fish or cleaning nets?

We come to this portion of Scripture and what we find is Jesus and his disciples. Jesus and his disciples.

But it begins with a crowd of people. All around Jesus were crowds. And again, as he comes into this part of the country, the Bible says, he was pressed about with a multitude.

The people were all around him. They pressed around him. They wanted to hear what he had to say. Now Jesus must have been a phenomenal preacher, by the way.

[2 : 21] You know, I went to college with Bishop Frank Ratif. I studied at the Bible Institute and slept in the room next to him. I got close to him, you know. And I got to hear him.

And when we sat in lectures at college, let me tell you, if Frank Ratif opened his mouth, everybody listened. It was interesting to observe.

But that's how it was. No wonder God used him so mightily. And he's still using him. And he's been a great preacher.

Some of you might have heard the late Reverend Roger Volk preach at St. James years ago. How many? Shake your heads if you did. Yes, sir. There those hands go up. A great preacher, right?

One of my favorites. I'm sorry God took him so early in life. Rex Mathey. And Bishop Joe Bell. People that can still hold your attention.

[3 : 17] But Jesus. Let me tell you, Jesus would have captivated your every thought and faculty. You would have riveted your attention on Jesus.

That's what was happening here. These people were pressing in around him. And wherever he moved, there were people. And they wanted to hear what he had to say to them as he preached the word of God, it says here.

But this was on the side of the lake. They were there on this beautiful lake. They were enjoying the beauty around them.

And they were enjoying the people. They were enjoying hearing Jesus. But I want you to see here in this true account here. That Jesus, while he saw the people.

While he saw the crowds. While they were flocking and listening to him. Jesus really was wanting to talk to his disciples. He was really wanting to communicate with the men that he had specifically chosen to follow him.

[4 : 26] You see, he was not wanting them just to follow him. But he was wanting to teach and to train them. So that they could actually be his men when he left.

They would be left behind to carry on the work that had been started. And so he had his eye on the disciples.

And so the second verse says, He saw two boats. Did you see that? He saw two boats standing there. And the fishermen from those boats were not in the boats.

They had gone out of the boats and were busy cleaning their nets. You clean your nets because you don't catch fish with dirty nets. So they were busy cleaning their nets.

But these were his disciples. These were the very men that he had called to come with him and to go with him and to learn. And he finds them.

[5 : 30] And he finds them back there cleaning their nets. While he's busy with the people, they're cleaning their nets. You might be doing that this morning.

You might be a follower of Christ. You might be a disciple of the Lord. But you've gone back to just cleaning the nets. Just doing the old chores.

Just doing the old things you usually do. Some of it is sitting in a pew. Some of it is pouring the tea. Some of it is standing at the door.

Some of it is taking up the offering. It's just the old things that we've done all the time. We keep on doing them. And it goes over and over and over. The routine is there.

And we fall into the rut. And we fall into the routine. And we just do it. And there's so much that we do that Jesus never even asked us to do. Yet the one thing he asked us to do is the very thing that we are neglecting and failing.

[6 : 32] He found his disciples back cleaning their nets. Well, he saw the two boats. But you see, while he was preaching to the crowds, he had his eye on the individual.

He had his eye on the individual. Look at verse 3. The Bible says, and this is where I love the Bible. Do you know what the Bible is? The Bible is a very explicit book.

And it doesn't say things for fun. It says them because there's a meaning to them. He saw two boats in verse 2. But in verse 3, he now gets into one boat.

See that? Well, you can't get into two boats at the same time normally. But he gets into one of them. And the one boat was Simon's.

That's right. He gets into the boat that was Simon's. Who was Simon? Peter, right? Okay.

[7 : 33] He gets into Simon's boat. You see, he's interested in the individual here. And my friends, as he looks out over St. Mark's this morning, he sees a bunch of people here.

He sees a congregation here. He sees the members and the adherents and the friends here. He sees you as a group. But I want to tell you this.

He wants your attention. He wants you as an individual. He wants to communicate with you this morning. He wants to speak into your heart, your life.

He wants to change you if he can forever. He wants to move you from cleaning nets to catching fish. That's what he wants to do. And he was about to do it to Peter.

Peter, he was about to teach him a lesson that he would never forget. The Bible says he got into one of the boats and he said to him, put out a little from the land.

[8 : 37] Push out a little. And they pushed out a little. And the boat that he got into was Simon. Simon Peter. Now you remember, John, in John's Gospel.

Peter is brought to Jesus by Andrew, his brother. What a character Andrew was. Andrew, the disciple Andrew, was found three times in the Bible.

He's mentioned three times in the Bible. And every time he's bringing somebody to Jesus. Well, I wish I had that kind of testimony.

But he brought his brother Peter to Jesus. And here it says in John 1, 42, Thou art Simon, thou shalt be.

What was he doing here? He was saying to Peter, listen, you are now here as a little man. You're just a little old man. But one day you will be a great rock for me.

[9 : 42] You will be the man to start the early church. And it will be built on, it will be, you will be part of the building of that church. See, he looks at your life too.

He looks at your individual life. And he says to you today, you are now such and such. But you can become somebody different. You can become some tool in my hand.

You can become some disciple that is counting for God. That your life becomes worthwhile. And you become a person who affects people around you. That they want what you have.

That you can introduce them into the kingdom of God. You see, he's interested in the individual life. He wants you to learn how to move from cleaning nets to catching fish.

And you can do that if you'll go along to this course. If you'll be trained by your pastor so that he can take you by the hand and go out with you into the area and touch hearts and touch lives for God.

[10:47] He says to him, you are Peter, but you will be. And somebody said it's like God has got bifocals on, you know. That you can, with the top part you look far.

But with the little part of the bottom you look near. Now that's exactly it. God knows your life. And he can see far. And he can see what you can become.

And not just this close up thing. Well, what else happened here? Well, he gets into Simon's boat.

And they push out from the land. And it actually says there, and he stopped speaking.

I like that. He stopped speaking. Jesus now stopped speaking. He was even communicating from the ship, from the boat.

But then he stopped speaking. That's what it says in verse 4. He stopped speaking. And he said to Simon now. He stopped speaking to the crowd out there on the shore.

[11:48] And he says to Simon who's in the boat with him. Didn't you like that? Just Jesus and Simon in the boat. I mean, he had Simon's attention.

And Simon had Jesus completely to himself in this boat. And Jesus was saying to Simon in effect, I am going to teach you a lesson, Simon.

I am going to teach you a lesson that you will never forget. And it was an object lesson, you know.

It's going to be an object lesson. I don't know about you, but the kids have gone to Sunday school.

But when I was in Sunday school, I loved object lessons. If the teacher said, I've got an object here today. And I don't know if you know what it is, but it's in my pocket. And I'm going to bring it out and show you.

I couldn't wait for them to bring out that object out of their pocket. And show me what the object lesson was. Because an object lesson gets your attention. And this is what's going to happen to Simon.

[12:49] Simon is going to have a lesson taught to him that day that he would never forget all his life. So Jesus stopped speaking. And you know, you and I need to stop speaking sometimes.

Did you know that? Did you know that the church is very good at speaking? Have you heard yourselves when you stop and say amen? How the church starts to speak.

And now we run out to the hall and have fellowship and we talk. And we come to group meetings. Why we can talk? Well, it's good, of course.

There's nothing wrong with it. It's good. Because it's called fellowship. And we build each other up.

And we share together. And how's it been going? And what's this and that?

And the next thing. And we can talk. And we can talk at leadership meetings, Nick. I don't know about your leadership meetings. But mine in my churches. Boy, they could go on for hours.

[13:49] Now, you know, we need to get a place in the church of Jesus where we stop speaking. And we start doing. We start doing what we talk about. We start doing what we sing about.

Jesus saves. Jesus saves. Hear the news. Jesus saves. Well, are we doing it? Or are we just singing it? You see, Jesus stops speaking here in verse 4.

He stops speaking and he said to Simon. What did he say to Simon? Launch out into the deep. Launch out into the deep.

Now, this is one of the most dynamic, challenging statements in the word of God. When he says to Simon, launch out and lay down your nets.

And what does Simon say to him? This is what he says to him. Master, we've been fishing all night.

[14:52] And we've caught nothing. Now, you know, what was Simon doing when he answered like that? Do you know what he was doing? He says to him, Master, he is trying to tell Jesus, look, Jesus, we have fished all night.

We are fishermen. That is our trade. And we are fishermen. And look, Master, you know, we've fished all night. We've caught nothing. And if we go out again, it's not going to happen.

Anyway, what do you know about fishing? That's what he's saying. He's really questioning Jesus, saying, what do you know about fishing? Now, Jesus knows everything, by the way.

He knows everything. Let me tell you, Christ Jesus, your Lord, knows everything about everything about your life and my life. He even can fix motor cars, by the way.

Now, you might laugh, but I had a personal experience of this coming down from Johannesburg many years ago. I was driving a little Mini. Now, that means nothing to you. But my wife was in front with our little bus, and I was driving this Mini.

[16:01] We had to get it to Cape Town. We were moving from Joburg to Cape Town. And the Mini was one that I had built up myself for three years. I had worked on this motor car.

I knew it. The bolts from the back bumper to the front bumper, I knew the vehicle. I built three Minis up for my kids. Roger got a different car. But three out of the four got Minis.

So I know a Mini to this day. I know it backwards. Now, I'm driving it. I hadn't got 50 Ks out of Johannesburg, and this thing starts to jerk on me, you know. So I start to tell the Lord, Lord, this is a long way to Cape Town, and this car is jerking.

Please, can you help me? Now, I know the car. And I said, Lord, I know this car, and I've worked on this car. But, Lord, you know it better than me. Please, can you help me?

And you know what? That car came right, and we drove it all the way to Cape Town, you know.

Now, let me tell you, friends. Don't just say Jesus is a carpenter.

[17:04] Don't just say that Jesus doesn't know this, or Jesus doesn't know how to sew a garment, that Jesus doesn't know how to help you with your baking problem, ladies, or Jesus doesn't know how to help you, gentlemen, with a problem in your home or somewhere else.

Listen, you can take it all to Jesus. Some people say, ah, that's too small to pray about. No, everything is small to God. Nothing's big to God.

Everything is small. You can go. So he's trying to tell Jesus, what do you know about fishing, when he answers him like that. We do that. In the church, we do that.

We say, Jesus, you don't know how hard Plumstead is, or Southfield. You don't know how hard this area, the people won't listen to us. If we knock on doors, they won't accept us.

You don't know, Jesus. He knows all right. He knows all right. It's us that need to launch out, you see. It's us who need to take his word to heart and obey and launch out.

[18:08] That's what he said to Peter. Launch out. And let down your nets. Well, he called him master. Now, you know what that master means?

I'll tell you now. It means chief commander. It means magistrate. It means governor of the city. It means president of a college.

That's the meaning of the word he was using there. When he said master, it wasn't just a good, clean, moral leader. It was master. You are master of everything.

And when Peter had said that, he eventually realized, what have I said? Oh, my goodness. What have I said? So it then says, nevertheless. See it in verse 5 there?

Nevertheless. Nevertheless. At your word. I will let down the nets. And you see. When you realize Jesus knows everything.

[19:08] He knows who those fish are. He knows that the sun was bright in the sky. He knows that it was in deep waters. Because they were going into deep waters. He knows that. And he let down the nets.

Nevertheless. At your word. At your word. I'll do what you say. He let down the nets. And what happened? Well. The nets were filled.

The nets were filled. And they. They were astonished. They were astonished. Look at verse 9. They were with him.

They were astonished at the catch of the fish that they had taken. Couldn't believe what they saw. Peter. Again. Seen a mighty miracle from Jesus.

The nets were filled. Probably began to break. Needed others to come and help them. To take the. The catch that they had got.

[20:08] Just listen to Jesus. If we just obey his word. He'll swamp our. Our boats. He'll break our nets. It'll. It'll all happen. But I want you to see.

That Peter was truly humbled by it. Peter was so humbled by this amazing. Object lesson that he had seen in front of his very eyes. Eyes.

Jesus. Performing a miracle. And in verse 8 it says. When Simon Peter saw it. He fell down at Jesus knees. Depart from me.

He said. I am a sinful man. Oh Lord. Now maybe some of you are like Peter here today. Maybe you saying in your heart. He's my master. Maybe you saying in your heart.

Oh he's my savior. He's my lord. He's on the throne of my life. He's in charge of my days. And my life. And my family. But you're not doing what he asked you to do. You're not going with the gospel. [21 : 07] You're not obeying him. And again today. He's touching your life. Again today. He's speaking into your heart as an individual. And you're like Peter.

When you see it. He fell on his knees. And you know what he's saying here. When he says this. Depart from me. He's saying Lord give up on me.

That's what he's saying. He's saying. Oh God I've failed you again. Oh Lord I've tried and I've messed up. Why don't you just give up on me. Why don't you just leave me and forget about me. I don't know if you've ever done that. But there's been those times in my life. As a pastor of a church. Nick will tell you. Many times you get to Monday. And you say.

Well I don't think I'm a good pastor. I may as well resign. I may as well get out of it. I may as well let somebody else do it. They can do it better than me. And you get that kind of thing in the Christian life.

[22 : 03] Where you say I've failed again. I've messed up again. And Lord give up on me. That's what he was saying to Jesus. You see. He was saying.

Just give up on me. My friend I want to tell you. If you've ever had a sense of failure. And that you can't do it. And that. I want you to understand.

That he's not going to give up on you. He didn't give up on Peter. Even though Peter said it. Even though you've got on your knees. And said Lord I'm failing you again. Just give up on me.

Just leave me alone. Just. Let me go my way. He won't let you go. He'll be there with you. He'll be there to take your hand. He'll be there to lead you on.

That's how it works in a Christian life. And so we see what he says to him. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid.

[22 : 58] You know what fear is? Fear is simply false evidence appearing real. That's what it is. And Satan will come to you with all sorts of fears.

When it comes to winning souls. When it comes to reaching out with the gospel. And going and launching out. And letting down the nets. And touching people's lives. Satan will come to you. You'll put the fear. Into you. That will stop you. And paralyze you. And hinder you. You and I as God's people. Need to recognize the ways of the devil.

As it says in Corinthians. We are not ignorant of the ways of Satan. We need to recognize those ways of the devil. And recognize that when he comes with fear.

Fear is not from God. It's from Satan. And we need to realize. He says here. Do not fear. Fear. From now on.

[23 : 59] You will catch men. That's what he said to Simon. Now he just caught fish. They couldn't catch it themselves. All night that fish didn't work. Now they catch the fish.

Through Jesus. And now he says to Simon. From now on. You will catch men. Now listen to me. That word men. In the original. Is you will catch men alive.

Did you see that? You will catch men alive. That's what it means. In other words. We have to catch people. Before they die. You see.

All men are dying. This is not the land of the living. This is the land of the dying we're in. We are going to the land of the living. Amen. This is the land of the dying.

As I look out here. You are all different. Your hair is at all different stages. I know. That's the classic thing that shows where we are in life.

[24 : 57] Right? You see. So you're busy dying right now. And the Bible is saying catch men. Catch them before they die. There's somebody that's died close to you and you didn't catch them.

You see. It's tragic. But it's true. People are dying around us and we need to catch them. Before they die. Will you spend the rest of your days doing that?

Will you? The last verse and then I'm through. Verse 11. So when they had brought their boats to land. They forsook all.

They followed him. They forsook all and they followed him. See this is what I want to say to you here. Firstly there's nothing wrong with having a secular job.

There's nothing wrong with having a job in a shop or a trade that you use. There's nothing wrong with it. As long as Jesus is in it with you.

[26 : 02] As long as you're sure in that office where you're a secretary that you're taking Jesus into that office with you. There's nothing wrong with secular life, secular work.

But then the second thing here is failure can end in success. In verse 8 Peter said I'm a failure. I'm a failure.

But it can end in success. If you give it to him. If you hand your life to Jesus. If you say take my days and my time and use them in a useful way.

I forsake all and I give it to you and I follow you and I hand it to you. You see Peter became a great apostle. Great apostle in the early church and God used him mightily.

And then the third thing here is follow Jesus with what? All your heart. All your heart. Because he's Jesus.

[27 : 05] Because he's the master. He wants our boats. He wants our nets. I don't know what yours are. You might have a great car that can be used in his service.

You might have a good home that could be used. You might have gifts and talents that he wants to take and use. You see whatever you give him. He will take it. And he'll break your nets.

And he'll swamp your boats. They forsake all. These disciples. And they follow Jesus. Oh may you. Do that. After these messages that you've heard in the last three weeks. Forsake all. And follow Jesus. Because that's the life.

Worth having. That's the life. That when you get. To his presence one day. It's going to be about the people.

[28 : 04] That you brought to Christ. See somebody brought you to Christ. Somebody. Put his thumbprint on your life. I don't know who it was.

It might have been your mother or your father. Your Sunday school teacher. Your pastor. Some evangelists that preached. Their thumbprint is on your life. But now.

Who's got your thumbprint. On their life. So that one day. When you get to Christ's presence. And stand before the judgment. Because you see.

I want you to know. Listen. The judgment is there. Not judgment for sin. No. Not talking about that. You've passed that judgment. If you've been saved.

By the blood of the lamb. You've passed the first judgment. But the second judgment. Is for service. And you'll stand there. And you see. There are many Christians. There are many Christians.

[29 : 02] That have come to know Christ. But are not living the life. They're not walking the talk. And they're not serving the Lord. I don't know where you stand. But wherever it is.

Make a commitment today. Say. I. Will work for Jesus. I'll work. For him. Till the setting sun. Let's pray.

We're going to pray. And if God is speaking into your life today. If you're the individual. Like Peter was. That he wanted to get your attention.

He wanted to give you a word. And I want. To pray for you. As we close the service this morning. If Christ has spoken into your life.

And you want to work for him. Because you're tired of cleaning nets. You really do want to catch fish. You do want your life to count for God.

[29 : 59] You do want to stand before the Lord. On that judgment day. Not with empty hands. But with hands. That have labored. For the master.

And friend. I'm inviting you in this church. To stand to your feet. If you mean business with God. If you really mean business with God. Stand up. And let's pray together. As we close this service.

And you stand simply saying. I am committing my life. I'm forsaking all. I'm going to follow Jesus. Would you like to stand? Just feel free.

To stand in this church here today. You're not standing in front of me. You're standing in front of the Lord. Stand to your feet. And let's pray together. As we close this service.

As you commit yourself. Today. To working for the master. To being trained. To being equipped. For the work.

[30 : 57] Of winning souls to Christ. Father in heaven. I'm coming to you with a group of men and women. In this church building today. That are standing to their feet.

And standing. They are saying. I am willing Lord. I am willing Lord. To be a true disciple. And I'm willing Lord.

To be changed like Peter was changed. And I'm willing Lord. To go out there. And to touch lives. To make a difference. And to win somebody.

My family. My friends. My neighbors. My workmates. And willing to win them to Christ. And to make them true disciples also.

And so Lord bless each one. That stands to their feet in this place. And see their commitment
Father. And help them in it we pray. We ask in this.

[31 : 56] In the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.