

Theme: Going Fishing – The Fishing Stories of Jesus
“Cast Your Nets Into Deep Water”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

June 23-24, 2012 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

Luke 5:1-11

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

VIDEO Going Fishing Week 1 Sermon Starter

SLIDE Cast Your Nets Into Deep Water

One of the wonderful new ministry here at First United Methodist Church that has begun in the last few years has been *Hooked For Life*. A fly-fishing ministry aimed at teaching people how to fish and providing fellowship for those who enjoy fishing in the outdoors here in the Durango area. The group sponsored a beginner fly-fishing course this spring and 16 of you participated in that with them. They have sponsored this kids fishing day the past several years and each week during this current sermon series they are going to be giving us some tips on fishing that tie into our themes each day as we begin a new sermon series on, "Going Fishing - The Fishing Stories of Jesus."

In the text we read today we heard about Simon Peter doing something that I have done many times, which is fish for hours and not get anything. He has been fishing all night and has not caught a thing but then Jesus takes him to just the right spot and he brings in a great load of fish. Today we are going to look at what that story teaches us about Jesus and what it teaches us about human beings and what it might teach us about God's will for our lives today. I think you will find that this story speaks to us in profound ways.

I would like to invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments. At the top you will find today's Scripture passage as well as space for you to write something down from today's sermon that speaks to you. There are five very simple points in today's message and I would love for you to write them down as we go along. Then you will find daily Scripture readings and I want to encourage you to read the Bible daily on your own and reflect upon what those passages might mean for you each day. You will find that it only takes 5 minutes to do these each day and if you don't have a Bible of your own we will give you one for free.

Don Oliver took my daughter and I out this last week to do some fishing and it's amazing when you're with the master fishermen how much you can learn about where to fish and how to fish and what to use as you are fishing to catch the right kind of fish. That's exactly what we are going to be learning over the next few weeks together as we reflect on lessons from the master fishermen about how to fish for people.

Here's the first point in this message today I want you to get. You might want to write this down and there are pens in the pockets in front of you or if you are watching at home you could just get out a piece of paper and a pencil to write with for now. This is a very simple point as we learn something about Jesus in this passage. What do we learn?

SLIDE Jesus loved the Lake

How many of you like to go to the lake or to the stream or to some body of water? Sometimes I go to Lake Electra to work on my preaching outline for the year in the fall. We have had staff retreats there and there is something peaceful about that setting, especially when there are not many people around. We have a pond in our subdivision and I love to go and just sit on the water in a floatie. There is a connection with Jesus that we can have simply by being around water because Jesus loves the Lake.

There is so much in the Gospels that take place around the lake which we

know as the Sea of Galilee. Jesus grew up about 20 miles from the lake in the town called Nazareth. That would've been a two-day walk in the day of Jesus but when he began his public ministry he relocated from Nazareth to the town of Capernaum which was a lakeshore town. I thought it might be helpful as we look at these fishing stories of Jesus if you would know a little bit about the lake so let's learn a bit about the Sea of Galilee.

In some translations is called the Lake of Genesserat. It was also called the Sea of Tiberius as it was named after the Emperor. Most people knew it as the Sea of Galilee but it is hardly Sea as it is only 40,000 acres which would be about the size of Lake Vallecito. The Sea of Galilee is about 84 feet deep on average and the deepest spot is 140 feet. Let me show you on a map where it appears in the holy land.

SLIDE Sea of Galilee map

You can see the Mediterranean Sea on the left and the Dead Sea is below it to the South. The Dead Sea is the lowest body of water on the planet and the Sea of Galilee is the second lowest body of water on our planet and the lowest freshwater body. The Jordan River connects these two bodies of water as it flows out of the Sea of Galilee and into the Dead Sea.

SLIDE Sea of Galilee closer

This next image zooms in on the Sea of Galilee so you can see where Capernaum is on the top left of the map. Nazareth is in the lower left area and when Jesus preached his first sermon in Nazareth they tried to kill him, which can read about in Luke chapter 4. Jesus then travels to the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee where we find the town of Capernaum. Tiberius over on this coast on the left is the largest city on the lake and it is named after the Emperor. Magdala where Mary Magdalene was from is the city where fish were taken to be salted after they were caught and then they were shipped throughout the Roman Empire. Bethsaida means, "House of Fish," and it was here that they made fishhooks and other supplies for the fishing industry.

SLIDE Sea of Galilee Google Map Image

Here is a Google maps image of the Sea of Galilee and you can see that it is shaped a bit like the continent of Africa. This is where the three years of Jesus' public ministry took place. He chose this place and it was here that his heart really connected with people and I'm guessing with God.

Jesus could have done his ministry in Jerusalem or one of the big cities but

instead he chose to go to the lake. When people in the first century heard about Jesus and the Gospels what they heard about was a man who went and stayed at the lake and did his ministry. He didn't go to the big cities but instead stayed in the small towns and villages that surround the lake. In case you have never been to the holy land here is a video so you can get an idea of what the Sea of Galilee looks like.

VIDEO Sea of Galilee

SLIDE Sea of Galilee

This is this sea of Galilee looking back towards Tiberius. Then we can across looking to the North West shore and the hilltop that you see are the Horns of Hittim. You can see the kind of boat that you travel in when you visit the holy land.

You also might find it interesting to see the kind of boats that Jesus and his companions traveled in during their day. Josephus, the first century historian, tells us that there were 230 licensed fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee in the first century. Back in 1986 the waters on the Sea of Galilee receded due to drought and there was 100 feet of mud exposed. Two men were walking in that area of receded shoreline on the northwest side of the lake and they saw what looked like a boat in the mud. The boat was excavated and archaeologists found that it was approximately 2000 years old. This boat could have been from the time of Jesus and it allows us to see what the fishing boats look like during that day. I thought you might enjoy seeing this.

VIDEO Ancient Fishing Boat

SLIDE Ancient Fishing Boat

Here is the boat as it is being removed from the mud. They preserved it and now is on display at Genneserat in a museum. From this they have been able to re-create a model of what the boat looked like both in scale and in size. The model is set up outside the museum and so we have an idea of the kind of boats that people fish in and traveled upon the lake in during that time of Jesus, when he was preaching and teaching in our story today.

In our Scripture passage today we read this about what happens to Jesus on this day on the shore of this Lake that you have just seen.

SLIDE *One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had*

left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

SLIDE Sea of Galilee

As the crowd is gathered around him, they all wanted to hear Jesus but they are having a hard time and so they press forward and in doing so his feet are in the water and finally he realizes he has to do something. So he climbs in one of the fishing boats and he asked the owner to push out from shore a bit so he can teach from the boat. Jesus does this not just because the crowd is pressing in upon him but also because water acts as a natural amplifier of sound.

Sound carries across the water and you probably have experienced this as well. I was up at Electra Lake last year sitting on a dock thinking and reflecting about sermon for the coming year and a boat went by out on the water. When they cut the motors I could hear the people talking very clearly on the boat, not because they were talking loudly but because the sound carried easily across the water. So be careful when you are out on the water talking on a boat because you never know when your preacher might be sitting on a dock nearby listening. This was a way for Jesus to be heard as he was out in the boat.

So the first thing we learn about Jesus in this passage today is that he loved the Lake and that his ministry took place around it. The second thing that we learn comes from this part of the passage that we have just read where Jesus in essence says to Simon Peter, "Can I borrow your boat?"

Simon Peter has been working all night long fishing and now he is cleaning out his nets and getting ready to take a break and Jesus says to him, "I need your boat right now. Would you come out and join me here in the boat and take me out so I can preach to the people?"

SLIDE Jesus wants to borrow your stuff.

This is the next message. Jesus wants to borrow your stuff. I know people who don't like to loan anything to anybody. Stuff never comes back in the same way that they loan it out and so they are not going to loan it to anybody. I don't loan my car. I don't loan my boat. I don't loan my tools. I don't loan nothing because it's mine and I don't want it ruined.

Yet here is what Jesus tells us in this story. He wants to borrow your stuff. I can tell you story after story of people in this congregation who have loaned their stuff to God. Some of you have loaned cars and some of you have loaned tools

and some of you have given large amounts of money to Jesus because he needed to build up his kingdom. I'll share with you just one story from my own life. When my wife and I were in Ukraine adopting our children we ran out of money. You have to take large amounts of cash with you to complete an adoption in Ukraine and there are quite a few payments that happen under the table and over those first two weeks in the country we realized we were not going to have enough cash. We called a member of this church and without blinking an eye they wired us the money that we needed.

That's how it works. Somebody is in need and Jesus says to you through a little voice inside your head, "I need what you have right now for this person." Remember that Jesus said, "In as much as you go to the least of these you have done it unto me." Jesus sometimes needs to borrow your stuff. The real question is this. **Are you willing to loan it to him?** Are you willing to loan your time, your talents or your stuff when Jesus needs it?

We need to recognize that in this story Peter has been fishing all night long and he had not caught a thing. It was a bad night of work for him and here he is cleaning his nets and getting ready to put things up for the day. He is ready to go home and he's probably frustrated. Now Jesus wants to preach from his boat! Do you realize what an inconvenience this was for Simon?

I don't know how long Jesus preached for but I'm guessing that he preached longer than I usually do. My target is 33 minutes but you all know that sometimes I don't hit that target. I know it feels like an hour to some of you but I am guessing that Jesus probably did preach for an hour and I'm guessing that it may be felt like 10 min. because it was Jesus. But to Simon, who was ready to go home, it probably did feel like an hour as he is sitting there waiting. Imagine he might've been thinking, "Come on Jesus. Wrap it up! I'm ready to go home."

I imagine it was inconvenience to Simon and he might've even thought, "Do you think you could check with James and John down the beach a little bit? That's their boat over there and I'm really tired." But he didn't make any excuses. He just pushed his boat back from the shore and let Jesus borrow his boat.

So the first point is that Jesus loved the Lake and the next point is that sometimes Jesus wants to borrow your stuff. The third point is found in what happens next in the story so let's look at the Scripture beginning with verse 4.

SLIDE *When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."*
"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't

catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."

I love this part of the story where Jesus wants to bless Simon because Simon has loaned him his boat. Jesus doesn't have to take Simon fishing, but Jesus wants to bless him and he doesn't quite get it. Simon is reluctant to do what Jesus had said. Right now he is just a fisherman and he has become a follower of Jesus just yet. I hope you hearing in the interchange between Simon and Jesus the attitude that Simon has.

"Really Jesus? Are you serious? Dude, I've been out all night long. I know this Lake. I am a professional fisherman. You're carpenter and you're going to take me out fishing now? I'm cleaning my nets and ready to go home."

Remember that these are not the small little nets we used to pull a fish out of the lake or stream. These are the big dragnets that are up to 200 feet long. Simon has cleaned them up and put them away and so justifiably asks, "Do you really want me to get out my nets again? That's a lot of work. What do you really know about fishing anyway? Are you serious?"

When I was in college, my campus pastor used to say, "Are you for real?" I imagine that this is how Simon responded to Jesus as he reluctantly says, "Well, if you say so I guess I give it a try."

Have you ever responded to someone like that before? You give them all the reasons why they are inconveniencing you with their request and then you say, "But I guess if you want me to I will." You're trying to get them to say, "Oh no, that's okay, don't worry about it. It's no big deal." I know that you have done that before. My kids do that to me all the time as a parent.

That is what Simon is doing to Jesus and here is what I think is so important to notice. Most of the time in the Bible when God calls people they don't want to do what God is asking to do, at least not in the beginning. I think it is important to be honest about it because it can be very refreshing for us. We have this idea that if you are a good Christian then when you feel that little voice and that tug calling you to do something then you will immediately go, "Cool, I can't wait to loan my boat!"

But that is not what the biblical figures do that God used to change the world. My favorite example is Moses in Exodus 3. You may remember the story but in case you don't let me remind you that Moses is out in the wilderness, taking care of his father-in-law's goats. There is a burning bush and God speaks to Moses through the bush and says, "Moses, I need you to go back to Egypt and tell

the Pharaoh to let my people go free. He is keeping them as slaves and I want them to be free so I want you to go tell Pharaoh to let go of his economic security and retirement plan."

Moses responds, "Really? You want me? I can't do that."

"Sure you can," God says back to Moses, "I will go with you."

"I appreciate that Lord, but when I tell them that a burning bush sent me, how is that going to work? Who's going to believe me?" Moses says.

God tells him, "No, no, no, you just tell them that I AM sent you."

"What if they don't believe me God?" Moses complains again.

"Well, I'm going to do some really cool miracles and they will have to believe you."

"But Lord, what if they still don't believe me? Besides that, I stutter. I don't talk very well. Seriously, send my brother Aaron he is a great salesman." Moses gives his best excuse.

God responded, "Did I not give you a tongue? I will put the words in your mouth and you will see exactly what I need to say."

Do you remember how the exchange ends? This is what Moses says, "Lord, please just send somebody else!" It's right there in the Bible! The greatest leader of the children of Israel and the Old Testament is a man who argued with God and tried to say no when God called him to do something. The greatest thing that God would call any human being to do in the Old Testament and Moses tried to say, "No."

When God tries to call Isaiah, Isaiah says, "I am a man of unclean lips. Woe is me. I can't do this." God says, "Yes you can. Let me cleanse you."

Jeremiah says, "I'm just a kid. Who am I to do something like this?" God said to him, "Don't say you are just a kid. I will work through you."

Queen Esther said, "Who am I to try and save the people of Israel? I am a woman and no one will listen to me." But God tells her that he will raise her up and open people's ears to hear.

Most of the time, when God calls you, inside you will have a voice that says, "I don't have the time." You will have 1000 excellent excuses why you shouldn't do it. You will feel like you are not qualified or well equipped but let remind you that God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called. It is normal to have

doubts and to balk when you feel called by God.

But after you have put up all your excuses, you finally go ahead and do what God asks. God is expecting you to put up excuses and to resist him, but he wants to know that in the end, after you have resisted, that you will finally say, "Yes."

Jesus tells the parable about a father who had two sons. The father told each of the sons to do something and the one boy says, "Sure dad, I'll do that for you." Then he leaves but he never does it. The other son says, "Dad, I just can't do that. I'm sorry." But the boy thinks about it some more and in the end he goes out and does what his father requested. Then Jesus asks, "Which one do you think do the will of his father? It is not the one who said, 'Yes, I'm going to do it,' and then never did anything about it. It is the one who was reluctant at first and maybe even said, 'No,' but did what his father wanted."

It's okay to be reluctant, but somewhere along the way we have to move to, "Yes." That's a third point in this story.

SLIDE We have to find our way to, "Yes."

Even though you feel reluctant about doing that thing at first that you know God wants you to do, will you make your way to saying, "Yes?"

Here's the fourth point in this story and it comes from a small line in this story where Jesus tells them to go out to the deep water. Go to somewhere that is deeper Jesus says. That almost sounds like a haunting line, "Go out to the deep water."

I want you to imagine what this would have meant for Simon Peter. There is no electricity and no backup batteries and no flashlights. You are fishing at night and the deep water is in the middle of the lake where there are squalls and he can be dangerous. So where do you fish at night? Do you go to the middle of the lake and the deep water? Not at night you don't. You will stay by the shoreline where it is safe and you will drag your nets where it is 10 feet deep and you hope you catch something. Simon didn't catch a thing at night and at this point Jesus knows he has been in shallow water the whole time and he says, "I want to go out to the deep water."

The deep water is the place that you don't want to go. It's the place that makes you a little bit nervous. It's the place that is somewhat inconvenient because it is farther away. It is the stuff that stretches you and takes you outside your comfort zone. Jesus wants to take you to deep water. He doesn't want you

to stay in the shallow water forever.

For you, what does the deep water look like? Maybe you have been bringing your canned food when we put out the call for that or maybe you put a few dollars in the plate when we are trying to build a well. That's been pretty easy and that's very important to do as you participate in those kinds of giving opportunities. But that is sort of staying in the shallow end. If you're going to go into the deep water maybe you decide that you will go deliver the food to the soup kitchen or you will sacrifice eating out a couple times a week and give that to the special offering for those in need.

After you do that a few times you realize that you are still in the three-foot zone and not in the deep water. Maybe you decide to serve the people who eat the food at manna soup kitchen or the homeless shelter. Then you realize that you still are in Durango and you get to sleep in your own bed tonight. Maybe the deep water that is next for you is to go to the McCurdy Mission School or Shiprock, New Mexico and roll up your sleeves and stay overnight and serve people. Then you might realize that you are still in the Southwest and it's still pretty comfortable to do that because you are sleeping on a bed. Maybe the deep end looks like going to Haiti or Africa or Guatemala or Belize or some other part of the world where it is less comfortable and the water is much deeper and God can touch your life and your heart in ways that you never thought possible.

Are you willing to go outside your comfort zone and stretch yourself and go in to deep water that scares you just a little bit? For each one of us that is a different place, but it is in that deep water that you find the great blessings and the huge haul of fish. The deep water is not just about missions but it might be you telling someone about your faith in Jesus Christ. You have tried to talk about your faith before but all you ever get out is, "Will you come to church with me some Sunday?" That is awesome and I'm so glad for the many of you who do that, but there are people who need to hear why you have hope when things are tough. The deep water might be for you telling someone why you are Christian and what it means for you in an honest and open way, being vulnerable when maybe you haven't been that way before.

Going into the deep water might be becoming a Stephen Minister and doing 50 hours of training so you can walk with people through difficult times, offering one-on-one care and the presence of Christ. Going into deep water might mean taking the 10 week Alpha course that we offer to explore your faith more deeply or taking our Leadership from the Heart or Serving from the Heart or

taking Disciple Bible Study. Going into deep water for you might simply be giving up 10 min. of your morning and reading the Scripture and meditation moments that we give you each week.

Are you going to stay in the shallow end? I have read in several places over the past few years that American Christians have a faith that is a mile wide but only an inch deep. Our hope here at First United Methodist Church is that we would help you become the presence of Jesus Christ in the world in a deep and meaningful way. We want you to explore the deep waters because it is there that you will find the greatest blessings.

Here is the response of the disciples in verse six.

SLIDE ***And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."***

That is an interesting response to finding your boat filled with fish. This is your professional job and you now have a huge haul of fish and you fall down and beg the man who helped you catch all of those to go away. "I am a sinful man, please go away from me."

Simon doesn't say, "Hey look at me! I'm a big shot! Look at all the fish I caught!" Instead, he realizes that Jesus has just done something miraculous that has never happened before on this Sea of Galilee. He realizes that Jesus is inviting him into a partnership. Jesus is inviting him to come and follow and here is what Simon realizes.

"I am not worthy to be with this man who has brought all of these fish in my boat. He doesn't know what I think about sometimes in my worst moments. He doesn't know about that thing two years ago that I did that I would be ashamed for any human being to find out about. He doesn't really know me, because if he did he wouldn't even get into my boat. Jesus, I'm not worthy. I'm a simple man. I see how awesome you are. Please, go away from me."

Do you know what Jesus says to him?

"Simon, I already knew that stuff before even getting in your boat. I know what you think about at your darkest moments. I know what you did that nobody else knows about. Guess what Simon? I want you to come with me and help me

catch people."

SLIDE Jesus knows you and he wants you.

Jesus already knows the creepiest stuff you ever done. He knows the darkest thoughts that go through your mind and the things you do when nobody else is looking. He knows all that stuff and guess what he saying to you?

He saying, "I want you. I STILL want you to come and follow me and to fish for people. I want you because of who you are and I will take those things about you that you think are unworthy and make them your most powerful gift."

SLIDE Jesus came while Simon was at work.

Here's the last thing I want to leave you with today. I want you to notice that Jesus came to Simon while he was at work. Most of us who fish in this area do it for fun but Simon does this for a living. He has been fishing all night long and he is still on the clock and washing his nets and mending them when Jesus comes and asks to borrow his boat. Simon is still working when Jesus comes and asked him for his boat. Jesus says to him literally, "I need what you are doing for a living and while you are on the job to do God's work."

While he was still in his boat at the place that he worked Jesus asked him to take him out to the deep waters. It was in the workplace and in this stuff that Peter did with his hands every day that Jesus did a most amazing thing in his life. We have this idea that we go to church and our faith is over here in one pocket of our life. We can go on mission trips or do a service project or go to a Bible study but we do our faith over here and then we go to work at some other time during the week.

What if Jesus saw our lives differently? You might say that it is just your job, but Jesus doesn't look at it that way. Jesus looks at your work and says, "That your mission field! You're going to spend more time in what you do for a living than almost anything else you will do your whole life. That is not a separate part of your spiritual life but it is integral to what I want to do in your life."

Jesus literally says, "I want to go with you to work. I want to go with you to school. I want to go with you when you take care of your kids. I want us to work together. I want that to be your mission field. I see what you can do there and I put you there for a reason. It is not just a job."

You might say that is just a paycheck but to Jesus is not just a paycheck. It's a place to serve him. Some of us get addicted to our jobs and we spend too much of our life energy on them and to that Jesus would say that your job is not

supposed to be the God you worship. It is however your mission field.

I was meeting this last week with a woman who serves in one of our schools here in Durango. I was struck by how she talked about the difference she could make in the children's lives that she saw each day. She clearly didn't see her role in the school as a job. It was clearly a calling and a way of serving.

I went to the hospital recently to visit with someone and as I sat with them I was struck by the nursing staff. There is a huge difference between the nurses who remember their mission and see their work as a mission from God and those who forget what it is about. There were nurses that were awesome and that were kind and caring and compassionate and spoke to the patient with love in their voice. But I also saw nurses that were rude and one that was almost mean. They seemed to forget that the patient was hurting and need tenderness and care and instead they acted like the patient was an inconvenience and wished their busy day hadn't been interrupted by them. I realized they may have been having a bad day or not feeling well themselves, but that sure made me appreciate the nurses that did remember their mission when they walked in and asked, "How can I help you? What can I do to make you more comfortable? I know you were going to get better."

Let me ask you this question.

SLIDE Do you remember the mission?

When you walk out the door today and you have to work this week or to go to school or to home, do you understand that is not just a job but that Jesus wants to go with you? That's your mission field just like it was for Simon.

The story ends with verse 11.

SLIDE *And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*

The early church recognized that not everyone is supposed to sell everything they have and go to Africa and be a missionary. But we are supposed to be willing to say, "Jesus, everything I have I offer to you. My heart, my body, my life, my boat, my truck, my stuff, my job—it's all yours. Do with me what you will."

That's what I would like to invite you to say to God today in prayer. If you would bow your heads with me today and when you do, if you are willing to offer everything up to Christ, to simply put your hands out in front of you like you have everything in your hands, all that you are and all that you have, an offer that up to God. Pray as you want but you might say something like this.

SLIDE Prayer

Jesus, everything I have and everything I am I offer to you.

Forgive me for the times I have made excuses when you called.

Use me at home and at work to fish for people, to love them and to be your hands and your voice.

Lord, you see all of us here today. Their hands are uplifted and they are saying to you by this, "Lord, everything I offer to you." Help us to discern your will. Help us to live boldly and courageously. Help us to go to the deep waters. Help us to honor you, in your holy name. Amen.

Sermon Series: Going Fishing – The Fishing Stories of Jesus

Sermon Title: "Cast Your Nets into Deep Water"

Luke 5:1-11

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Meditation Moments - Monday, June 25 – Read Ezekiel 40:1-4, 47:1-12. Before Jesus' day, Israelites showed little love of the sea or water-related activities. But they saw fish as a part of God's creation (Genesis 1:20-23). Ezekiel was exiled in Babylon, a mighty city with reliable, secure fresh water from the Euphrates River. In Ezekiel's vision of a new Temple, a vast river flowing from it would extend fishing clear to the bleak Dead Sea area.

- Ezekiel wrote, "There will be great schools of fish, because ... wherever the river flows, everything will live" (verse 9). In his song "Dive," Steven Curtis Chapman said, "The river's deep, the river's wide, the river's water is alive, so sink or swim I'm divin' in!" How has immersing yourself in the river of God's love helped you to thrive?
- Babylon was one of the most powerful cities in the ancient Middle East. The symbol of a river larger than the Euphrates coming from the Temple in a rebuilt Jerusalem promised Israel water and food in a desert area. It stood for God-given life and security. In what ways does God offer you security in an insecure world?

Tuesday, June 26 – Read Luke 4:31-32, 4:38-5:3. The "Sea" of Galilee is a large lake, about 11 miles long and 7 miles wide. It's nearly 700 feet below sea level in northern Israel, with the Jordan River running through it. Jesus spent his youth and early ministry in Galilean fishing towns like Capernaum and Gennesaret.

- Luke showed that Simon Peter knew Jesus before Jesus used his fishing boat. He had seen Jesus restore his mother-in-law's health. But Peter's life, like ours, was a journey in faith, not a one-time event. In Luke 5 we'll see

him learn more about Jesus. In what ways have your faith and trust in Jesus deepened as you spend more time with him?

- *Archaeologists have confirmed many Bible places and people. They've found, many believe, the walls of Simon's house near the synagogue in Capernaum. How do such historical finds help to make Jesus more real to you? In what ways can you make his living presence with you today just as real?*

Wednesday, June 27 – Read Luke 5:4-7. Members of our church's "Hooked for Life" fly-fishing ministry are experts in the area of fishing and are sharing their fishing skills during this series. Pastor Jeff respects their expertise, so would you expect the pastor to tell them how to fish? That's what Jesus seemed to be doing with Peter, a professional fisherman. Peter trusted that Jesus was more than a carpenter and rabbi.

- *Several commentators note that when Jesus preached from Peter's boat, Peter was fine. When Jesus said, "Row out further, and drop your nets," Peter balked: "Wait—this is my business." In what ways are you tempted to limit Jesus to the "religious" part of your life, and to put "no trespassing" signs in other areas? When Jesus asks to come into every part of your life, will you say, "Okay— 'because you say so'?"*
- *In gospel stories like this one, Jesus provided in "over the top" ways. We may have a lot or a little in this life, but God's gift of grace and eternal life is extravagantly generous. What are three things you are "honest to God" really thankful for deep in your soul?*

Thursday, June 28 – Read Luke 5:8-11. Simon Peter already knew Jesus (see Luke 4:38). But as he and his partners pulled in the sudden and astounding catch of fish, Simon Peter realized that Jesus was much more than he had ever imagined. He was convinced that he was in the presence of God (his words echoed Isaiah 6:5). After that, nothing could ever be the same.

- *"When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees." "Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement." "Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid.'" How did a wonderful thing (the huge catch of fish) make Peter afraid? Have you ever felt a sense of inner awe or fear when God's presence became more real to you? What does Jesus' reply—"Don't be afraid"—tell you about the kind of relationship he wants with you?*
- *When Jesus called you, did you need to leave anything behind? Jesus*

doesn't ask most of us to "leave all" for him, but he does ask for hearts willing to do so. Are you willing to use all your spiritual gifts and resources in the great "fishing" work God calls us to?

Friday, June 29 – Read Acts 18:5-11. The good news of Jesus spread. The apostle Paul joined Peter, Andrew, James, John and other early Christians in the kind of "fishing" Jesus called them to. They never felt they could do the work on their own, apart from Jesus' presence. In the pagan city of Corinth, Paul had a vivid, reassuring vision of Jesus, one that upheld him for 18-months of preaching and ministry.

- *Synagogue members "opposed Paul and became abusive." So he "left the synagogue," but "Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord." In what ways did God gift Paul so that he could win over the leader of a group who had abused him? In what ways do you see God at work blessing others through your gifts? Do you value what God is doing through you, whether it seems "big" or "small"?*
- *Jesus said to Paul in a dream, "Do not be afraid ... I am with you." How does it change your outlook on difficult, scary situations to have a sense that Jesus is with you, rather than being all alone? Where do you need God's comfort and courage right now?*

Saturday, June 30 – Read Acts 26:1-2, 9-23. At one point, Peter described the way he and his partners responded to Jesus by saying, "We left everything we own and followed you" (Luke 18:28, Common English Bible). Paul, defending himself against charges of causing a riot in Jerusalem, bore witness to the same radical kind of obedience. The evidence suggests he was a young man on the rise, one who could have expected influence and comfort as a religious leader in Jerusalem. But then he met Jesus—and after that all that mattered was that he was not disobedient to that heavenly vision.

- *God had a vision and a mission for Paul. God has equipped you for a unique mission as part of God's great mission (Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 12:1-8). To what extent have you already listened for and heard God's call on you? In what ways can you keep "tuning in" to God's vision for you? What heights of freedom, joy and purpose do you believe you'll have as you can say, "I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven"?*

Family Activity: Read Matthew 4:18-20. Discuss what Jesus meant by the words, "I will make you fishers of people." As followers of Jesus today, how can we

be fishers of people? Create a list of ways to help others grow to know, love and serve God and become deeply committed Christians. Cut out one paper fish for each member of your family. On each fish, write the words in Matthew 21:19. Draw pictures, write words, create a collage or place stickers on each fish representing ways each person can be a follower of Jesus and help others become one, too. Display the fish throughout your home as reminders to lead others to Christ. Pray and ask God to help you as you fish.