

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

St. Luke 5:1-11

5 July, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved in the Lord,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter learned a very difficult lesson that day when he let the down the nets simply because Jesus told him to. To be sure, the fact that Peter let down his nets at all shows that Peter believed that there was something special about Jesus. Cleaning and repairing the nets was a tremendous undertaking and they were already exhausted and frustrated by the fact that they had been out all night and come back empty-handed. But Peter had been listening to Jesus and the spark of faith had been lit.

At this point, Peter, like we so often do, was just indulging Jesus out of respect. He didn't really know who he was dealing with and so Peter's obedience was wasn't about fear of God or faith. It was more about humoring or even respecting this interesting man. Peter and his colleagues were certain through their years of experience that they were wasting their time and that the command was silly, maybe even stupid.

But Jesus is not one to be simply humored or indulged. He's not just a nice guy who has some good stuff to say. Ask Peter. Jesus is dangerous. Jesus is not just a philosopher who thinks high thoughts but doesn't have a lot of practical or real-world experience. No word or command of Jesus is futile or stupid. Every one of them is deadly serious and is disobeyed only at great temporal and eternal expense to both body and soul. It comes at great personal cost to truly know Jesus. To know Him rightly changes you. To believe in Him is to know that He is God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and you. It is to recognize that Jesus isn't just some nice-guy deity who doesn't really care about your sin. Faith is to recognize that it is you who know nothing, that you are an unholy sinner who does not deserve to be here this morning standing before the holy God who created you and against whom you have rebelled like Satan in the beginning. Faith knows that unholy sinners can't be in the presence of the holy God and live and therefore I should be cast away from Jesus' presence and die.

But our flesh fights tooth and nail to keep us from taking Jesus and His word too

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seriously precisely because of what it will cost. We are told repeatedly that the Bible can't be trusted because it's simply the out-dated words of misogynist men. So to, our pride and desire to be liked cause us to remain silent in the face of what God clearly says in the Bible is evil. We are happy to talk about sin and Jesus at church but we carefully guard our words in the world because we don't want to be labeled as weird or backwards or boring or prudish or bigoted. We don't want to lose friends or family. We don't want to lose our job or our place on the team. We act as though Jesus didn't really mean it when He said that if anyone denies Him before men, He will deny that person before His Father in heaven. We often treat the commandments as mere suggestions or we explain away why it isn't reasonable to expect us to actually keep them. "The cost of living is too high for us to live apart before marriage." "God understands that I can make more money working on Sundays, that my team schedules games on Sundays, that I'm not really a morning person, that Sundays are the only time I have to catch up around the house." "My anger is okay because I'm right." "God knows my children are good people even though they don't confess the true faith, they live in sin, and they no longer gather to His Word and to receive Holy Communion." "God understands that I am too busy to pray with my family and read the Bible with them and teach them the faith. Besides, it's really awkward and that's the pastor's job."

Repent. God sees right through all of it, straight to the idolatry that eats at your heart to consume it. Your excuses don't fool Him. He meant it when He said "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or Prophets...until heaven and earth pass away (which they have not) not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18) When God commands us to love Him with our whole heart, to stop being anxious, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to repent, to take eat and drink, to pray and read the Bible - He means it literally. He commands all these things to us because they are true and right and good. To do otherwise means death and hell for us. Disobedience means separation from God and therefore from life itself and every good.

Jesus loved Peter and He loves you too much to let us keep God at arm's length. Peter, like we all do, was blinded by the ever-present assumption that he was really a pretty good person who deserved to go to heaven. His self-righteousness blinded him to his total unrighteousness and thus his need for salvation. Today, we show how unseriously we take God's Word when we try to replace tolerance with truth, when we think and accept it when others think "What I do and believe now doesn't matter because I was baptized and went to church and was confirmed in my youth. I can despise the gathering of the saints and Holy Communion. I can watch gratuitously violent shows and play gratuitously violent games and God doesn't care. I

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can use foul language, dress immodestly, speak poorly of marriage and children, complain about my neighbor's weaknesses and withdraw from him and nothing will happen to me. I can freely flirt with my coworkers, give to God from my leftovers, replace real people with video games and avatars and chat rooms, seek pleasure in pornography and still go to heaven."

Jesus fixed Peter's wrong thinking because He loved him. But to do that, He had to bring Peter to the brink of death so that Peter no longer had anything to trust in, anything to take confidence in, including himself. Only by confronting Peter with the reality that he was a sinner who deserved God's righteous and eternal wrath, that even the best and most pious of Peter's works were filthy rags that condemned him, only then did Peter rightly know himself as we should also. The word of Jesus which seemed so foolish and pointless at first, to put out into the deep and let down the nets, a word which, again, Peter and his fellow fishermen were so sure in their own wisdom was wrong, showed itself to be a divine and powerful word, not simply by making there be an unthinkable amount of fish where and when there shouldn't have been, but because the consequences of that word brought Peter and his colleagues to taste the bitter fear of eternal death so that they might see the fullness of who Jesus of Nazareth is. Only God could have spoken such a word and caused such a thing! And suddenly, knowing that He was standing before the Almighty God of heaven and earth, who created the seas and filled them with fish, who came down in thunder and fire and earthquake on Mt. Sinai to give the Ten Commandments, who dwelled between the cherubim on the mercy seat in the temple, Peter was filled with terror remembering not only how dismissive he had just been of God's command to go fishing, but of every last one of God's holy ten commands, the unfathomably deep corruption of his heart, the countless idols who were dragging him into the dark abyss of eternal death.

We need to stop shrugging our shoulders when we hear God's Word. We need to stop acting as though God doesn't really care about His Commandments and the unholiness of our sins. We need to stop pretending as though our sins and our idols aren't sinking us into the depths of hell. Sin is never harmless. It is always destructive. Our sins are not annoyances in God's eyes. They are pure wickedness and merit our eternal judgment...nothing less. Our sins actually do hurt us and everyone around us. Some immediately. Some cumulatively. There is absolutely no excuse or way to rationalize things like skipping church, aborting children, refusing to forgive, not teaching our children the Word of God, being consumed with worry, withholding our offerings, living together apart from marriage, ignoring our neighbor's needs, gossiping about or tearing down our neighbor, loving pleasure and wealth and ease, lying, refusing children and treating them as an annoyance

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rather than a gift, tolerating any kind of false teaching. It doesn't matter what we tell ourselves or one another. These things and all the other things that man tries to justify contrary to God's Word are evil and kill us. Period.

When God's word calling us to repent of our sins falls on proud ears and hard hearts, when the Bible isn't enough and we want signs or something that sounds more impressive, we invite God's wrath and judgment upon our heads. When we approach the Bible, the Word of God, as its masters, it will only appear foolish to us because we are drowning in our own foolishness. Then, we will only know God according to the Law. We will know no peace. We will die eternally either in our pride or our despair. On the last day, our foolishness and the foolishness of the world will be fully exposed and when we see Jesus in His glory He will be nothing but terror to us. We will long for Him to depart from us and He will... forever and we will spend eternity without Him, without life or goodness, without joy or peace, in eternal suffering and torment and sadness.

But when we approach the Bible in humility, acknowledging God to be true even though all men are liars, then we will know Jesus as He desires all men to know Him - as the promised Messiah, God in the flesh who has come to save sinners, not destroy them. When we confess before God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to our brothers and sisters that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed by MY fault, by MY OWN fault, by MY OWN most grievous fault, and we confess that Jesus is the very Son of God wrapped in human flesh and crucified for the sins of the world, then, rather than asking Him to depart from us, we will urge Him with every fiber of our being to remain with us, to draw as near to us as He possibly can and never depart from us. Then we will know the Bible to be the very power of God for our salvation and we won't have need for signs or wisdom that satisfies the flesh. Having our pride put to death and having been raised from the pits of despair, we will treasure as our highest good what God has spoken through the prophets and the apostles. We will love to hear the Bible, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. We will love the commandments of God because they are from Him who is life and light and truth. We will no longer ask "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Instead, we will ask "Where and how often can I receive the life of Jesus and the fruits of His cross? Where can I go that Jesus is with me and I am with Him?"

The answer? Things that appear simple and foolish to those who are perishing but that are the very means by which God raises you from death to life. Holy Baptism, that very simple washing of water poured out of the hands of sinful men like yourself, is the work of God to make Christ's death to sin and resurrection to new life

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your own. On that day, God Almighty made an eternal oath that you are His own dear child and He is your Father who has washed away the guilt of all your sin. He promised to you a room in His eternal house and a seat at His banquet table. He bestowed upon you His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who makes you holy and fills you with holy, God-pleasing desires and strength to carry them out. And He promised you that He would raise you to eternal life, body and soul, on the Last Day when Jesus comes again and that your eternity will be filled with joy and peace beyond all measure in His presence and in the company of the angels and the whole Church.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ promises to draw near to you through those whom He has appointed to be fishers of men, who cast the nets of the Gospel into the world and draw in the elect who hear and believe, who are not offended by the humility of Christ, and who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God. Through His Word which He has placed in these humble and sinful men's mouths, Jesus forgives your sins as often as you confess.

So too, Jesus draws near to you in the most astounding way when He hands you bread from the altar and tells you to take it and eat it because it is Him. It is His true Body which He has given unto to death to save you and which has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at the Father's right hand. It is no representation or symbol. It is Jesus in the greatest of all mysteries and gifts, nearer to you than He was to Peter standing in the boat. Your reason and your senses, certainly the world, and even some who claim to believe Jesus, will tell you that it can't be. It's not possible. It's not reasonable. It makes no sense. They are wrong. The devil and their flesh have deceived them. They trust themselves more than they trust God. They are like Peter when Jesus told him to go fish. "Silly Jesus. He doesn't really know what He is talking about. I know what better. I know what is possible. I know what He really means." Ignore them. Tell them they are wrong. Point them to Jesus words "This is My Body." In the same way, your Lord gives you His true Blood, when you drink from the cup. He unites Himself with you and you with Him and with His whole Church, His body. And those who drink His Blood believing His promises, receive His promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Every word that God has spoken and caused to be written down in the Bible, He means for you to hear and believe. None of it is frivolous. None of it is more important than other parts of it. To imagine that you are free to change or ignore a single word of it, is to imagine that you have the authority to correct God. God doesn't waste words or misspeak. He says what He means and means what He

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says. Any change that anyone makes to what God has spoken, is an exchange of truth for a lie, life for death.

You have the Bible because God loves you. He wants you know Him rightly. He wants you to know what is good and therefore good for you and what is evil and therefore harmful to you. He wants you to know and be absolutely certain that Jesus has died FOR YOU and paid the full atoning price for your sins so that, trusting in Him, you don't have to live in the terror of hell and God's eternal and righteous punishment. He wants you to be comforted by Holy Baptism. He wants you to seek and believe His absolution which He speaks through your pastor. He wants you hunger and thirst for His Body and Blood and receive them as often as He offers them to you so that you may have peace and be refreshed and that He might strengthen your faith in Him and your fervent love toward one another. He gives you the Bible so that you can know what He has said with the utmost confidence. You don't have to guess or imagine. You don't have to wait for signs. You don't have to have a special degree. You do have to read the Bible. You have to pray that God would grant you His Holy Spirit who will put your Old Adam to death and give you a right understanding. He will grant it. The Bible is not magic but it is powerful. It is powerful because it is God's Word by which He draws near to you to save you.

May the Word of God be sweeter to your heart and your mouth than honey. For by His Word alone do we get understanding. By His Word alone are we saved. God grant for Jesus' sake that His Word would sound forth daily in each of your homes, that it may be your greatest delight to open your Bible and read it, for in so doing God Himself draws near to you and speaks directly to you because He loves you and desires your salvation. And may we to whom the Lord has drawn near strive by the Holy Spirit to conform every thought, word, and deed to His true and life-giving Word.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus and His Word unto life everlasting.