Called to Significance

Bible Background • LUKE 5:1-11
Printed Text • LUKE 5:1-11 | Devotional Reading • LUKE 9:57-62

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will CONTEMPLATE a miraculous catch of fish, REFLECT on Simon's changing attitude toward Jesus, and HEAR Jesus' instructions and eagerly obey them.

In Focus

Marilyn always heard that if you find a career you love, it will never feel like work. She had the career, but work never felt fulfilling. Marilyn knew this was where God wanted her, but also felt she could do more to minister.

She found that ministry when her mother's friend, Miss Sandra, yet again invited her to serve at the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Breakfast at her church. Miss Sandra's invitations were nothing if not persistent. Even though Marilyn always said she didn't have the time, Miss Sandra invited her every week. Finally, Marilyn cleared her schedule to go.

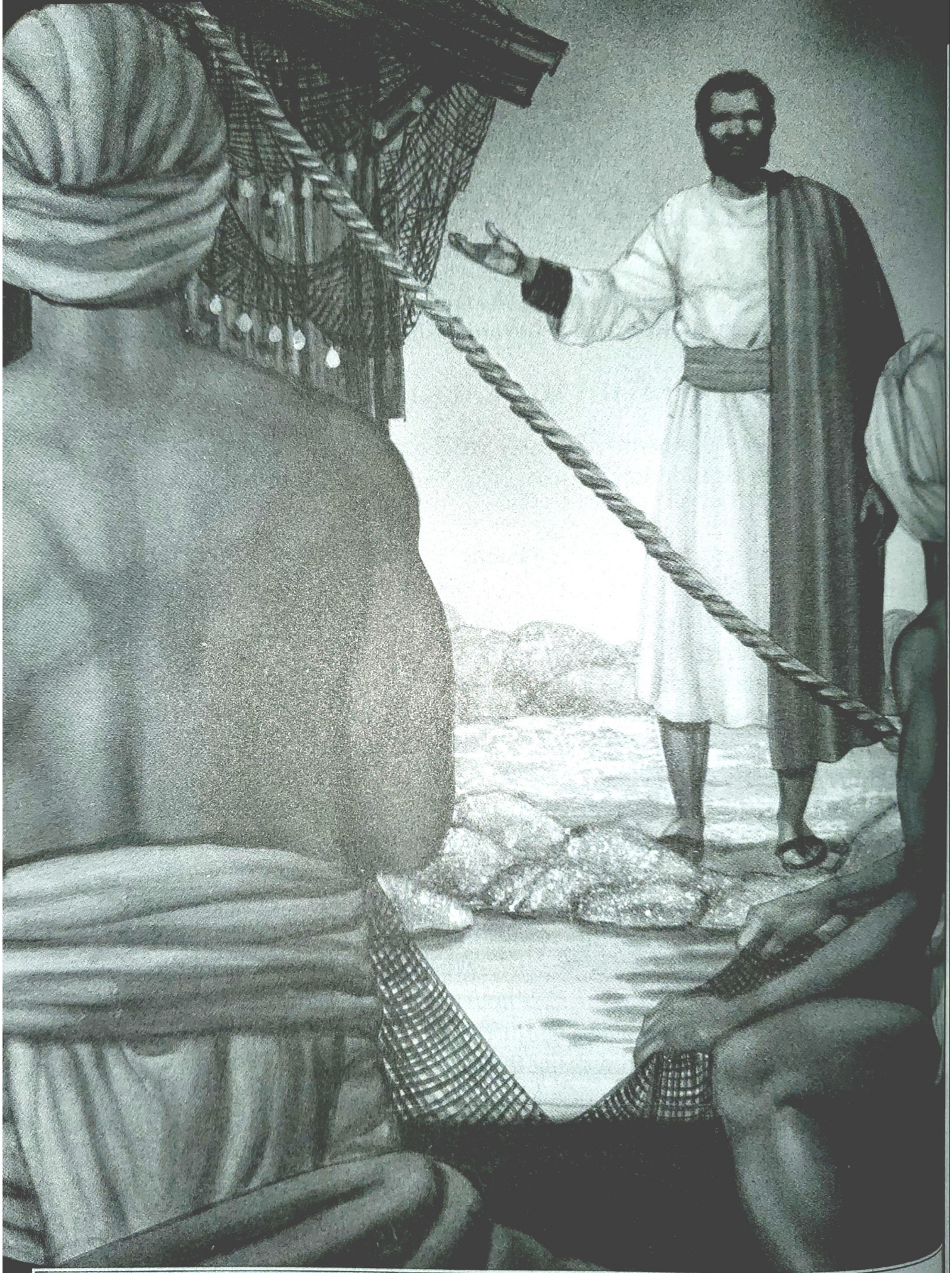
That morning, Marilyn entered the Fellowship Hall, not knowing what to expect. She found rows and rows of tables with homeless people—whom Miss Sandra always called "our unhoused neighbors"—chattering among themselves while waiting to be fed. She looked for Miss Sandra and found her at the front of the room, near the kitchen. As Marilyn threaded her way through the crowd, Miss Sandra called for quiet. Everyone gave Miss Sandra their full focus as she prayed before the volunteers started serving.

After the prayer, Marilyn spent the next hour moving from the kitchen to the tables, with trays full of plates of scrambled eggs, turkey bacon, and fruit salad. In the corner of her eye, she could see Miss Sandra doing the same while joking and laughing with the neighbors, offering a friendly word or a warm touch—or, best of all, a bit of hope. That hope touched Marilyn's heart. She said a prayer of thanks that Miss Sandra had invited her to serve, and she knew she would come back to serve again.

Are we humble enough to accept the blessing of being in service to others?

Keep in Mind

"Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (from Luke 5:10, KJV).



"Jesus replied to Simon, 'Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!'"
(from Luke 5:10, NLT).

Focal Verses

KJV **Luke 5:1** And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

NLT **Luke 5:1** 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.

2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets.

3 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.

4 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."

5 "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."

6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear!

7 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.

8 When Simon realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man."

9 For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him.

10 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!"

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

The People, Places, and Times

The Lake of Gennesaret is also known as the Sea of Galilee. It is called Gennesaret because the fertile Plain of Gennesaret lies on the northwest side of the lake (Matthew 14:34). The Old Testament calls it the Sea of Chinnereth because of the shape of it (Hebrew "harp-shaped," Numbers 34:11) and "Chinneroth" (Joshua 12:3) from the town so named on its shore. Gennesaret is probably the corruption of the name Chinneroth. The Sea of Tiberias is another designation (John 6:1; 21:1), associated with the capital of Herod Antipas. All of the names of this single body of water were derived from places on the western shore. The lake is located some 60 miles north of Jerusalem.

The Sea of Galilee was the focus of Galilee's wealth. Nine cities with a population of 15,000 or more stood on its shores. To the northwest was Capernaum, the home of Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:29) and where Matthew sat at custom (Matthew 9:9). It was also the scene of much of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

Background

Previously in Luke, the Lord Jesus was in Capernaum (Luke 4:31) healing many people who came to Him after the Sabbath (vv. 40-41). After these many mighty works, Jesus slipped away to pray in a deserted place near the city. His disciples found Him and reported how many people wanted Jesus to stay there among them. But Jesus told them that He had to go to the other cities and preach the kingdom of God, for that is what He was sent to do (v. 43). His mission was not to call others from a single place but to go to people throughout Judea—where they worked, where they lived, where they studied—and call them as they were, where they were. Jesus left Capernaum to preach in other cities of the Decapolis (see Matthew 4:25). His first stop was Lake Gennesaret (i.e., the Sea of Galilee) where He makes contact with a crowd of people and with some of the men whom He would call to be His disciples.

At-A-Glance

1. The Teaching (Luke 5:1-3)
2. The Miracle (vv. 4-7)
3. The Commitment (vv. 8-11)

In Depth

1. The Teaching (Luke 5:1-3)

On a certain morning Jesus was on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, near Capernaum. As a result of His fame at that time, a great multitude had already collected around Him there early in the morning to listen to His teaching. In order to be able to address the multitude more effectively, the Lord entered into Simon's ship—one of two that were standing by the shore of the lake. He then asked Simon to push the boat out a little further from land and from there He taught the multitude out of the ship. Jesus used an unusual setting from which to teach. It was not in a synagogue, but in a boat (v. 3). In other words, Jesus taught where the people were. The Bible tells us to "Go ye into all the world" (from Mark 16:15); it does not tell the world to come to us. Wherever the opportunity, be ready and committed to do what you can to share the Good News of God!

When have you shown a willingness to share about God in unexpected places?

2. The Miracle (vv. 4-7)

After He finished teaching, Jesus commanded Simon to launch out from the shore into the deep part of the lake and fish there. They were going to have to launch out further in the deeper part of the lake (v. 4). Simon then objects that they had toiled all night to catch fish but had caught

nothing. They had already washed their nets, apparently to put them away until another day (v. 5:2). After all, the best time for fishing with nets was during the night. Everything appears to be so unfavorable for fishing and Simon and his friends were probably exhausted and frustrated from their night's work, nevertheless, at Jesus' words, they obeyed His command.

Jesus rewards their faith. They catch so many fish in their nets that they have to call their partners in another boat to come and help them out. And even then both boats become so full of fish that they could not hold the catch.

We need "nevertheless" kind of faith in our lives today. "Nevertheless" faith means that, no matter what the obstacles are, we are going to move forward at Jesus' Words. Do you have "nevertheless" faith?

3. The Commitment (vv. 8-11)

The Lord's revelation of power in the field of Simon's particular calling makes a powerful impression on him. He falls before the Savior, overwhelmed by His divine glory and with a deep realization of his utter sinfulness. When we come into the presence of the Lord, we too must confess that we are sinful and need to be made whole. Jesus understands Simon's state of mind and speaks reassuringly to him. Unexpectedly, Simon receives a divine calling to evangelism. Simon, James, and John committed to the Lord Jesus Christ that they were going to follow Him to the end. They have no idea what they were going to be involved in, only that they would "catch men" (v. 10). Still, they dropped what they were doing and followed Him. We should have that kind of commitment today. We should be willing to forsake all and follow Jesus.

What have you forsaken for the sake of Christ? What do you still cling to?

Search the Scriptures

1. What was Jesus' command to Simon? How did Simon respond to Jesus' command (Luke 5:3–5)?

2. Why did Simon tell Jesus to depart from Him (v. 8)?

3. What did Jesus mean when He said: "thou shalt catch men" (v. 10)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What does it mean to "forsake all" and follow Jesus today? What kind of commitment does it take to follow Jesus? Is following Jesus difficult? Give reasons for your answers.

2. Should all ministers work for the kingdom full-time or is there space for bi-vocational ministers?

Liberating Lesson

Today, as in Jesus' day, thinking of walking away from your job to pursue full-time ministry is frightening. However, Jesus did not call His disciples to leave everything they knew. They would pivot from fishing for fish to fishing for people. Some of the same skills and natural talents would be applied differently. What natural talents do you use in your occupation that can be used to spread the Gospel?

While the fishermen left their nets to follow Jesus, the men also had a network of support that freed them to focus on full-time ministry. How can your Bible study group or church lend background support so others are financially able to devote themselves to the ministry?

Application for Activation

Think about the commitment you've made to Jesus. Are you still excited about it? If not, ask Him to give you a new excitement this week so you can become "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Encourage each student to write out a prayer to the Lord giving over their life, particularly in those areas where He is not fully

Lord. Encourage honesty. Suggest that students pray to be willing to do this, if necessary.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned: