

***Luke 5:1-11** So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup> and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." <sup>6</sup> And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup> So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.*

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Hello my name is Peter. You may know me as one of the Lord's disciples but the story I want to tell you today happened before I was a disciple. Today, I have to tell you a story about my greatest day of fishing ever. I know I know, fishing stories are a dime a dozen and only seem to get more amazing each time they are told. But you have to listen to this one, because it is true. It needs no exaggeration. I can remember it just like it was yesterday.

Oh, on the whole it was a pretty ordinary day. We had been out all night fishing. You see, I am a fisherman. And when you are a fisherman, you have good days and you have bad days. This was one of those bad days. We had tried and tried to fill our nets with fish. But it seemed no matter where we put down our nets, we came back with nothing. Time after time, we lowered the nets and raised them back up only to find nothing. Eventually we just had to call it a night. So we headed to shore and began to clean everything up for the night. We would have to try again tomorrow. Perhaps tomorrow would be a better day.

As we were cleaning up, a crowd starting gathered around. They were following this man called Jesus. There were so many of them, that only a couple could really hear what He was saying. Next thing I knew, Jesus had jumped into my boat. He asked me to push Him out a little so that more people could hear Him speak. So I did, someone might at least get a little good use out of the boat that night. We had had no luck.

You should have heard Jesus talk. He spoke in way that none of us had heard anyone talk in a long time. When He spoke, you just knew that He was telling the truth. It was like He had a special power in Him to speak. Oh, we didn't understand everything He was trying to teach, but He sure had our attention. Jesus talked for a while that night. But it was when He finished teaching that the story that I want to tell you began.

Jesus looked at me and said, go and put your boat out in the deep and put down you nets. I tell you, if I hadn't just heard Jesus teach, I would have thought Him nuts. I mean we had been out all night and caught nothing. And besides that we had just cleaned up everything. But just listening to Jesus, you knew that He knew things that we didn't. So if He said to give it one more shot, it seemed like it was worth a try. The worst thing that could happen was that we would still end up with nothing just like we had already.

So James, John and I got everything ready, pushed out into the deep part of the water, let our nets down. I don't think any of us knew what to expect. But none of us could have expected what happened. I know this may be the hard part to believe, but it really happened. It was hard for us to believe also.

When we put down our nets, something amazing happened. The net suddenly began to pull this way and that. It was like we had run into an entire school of fish or something. James, John, and I grabbed the nets. We didn't want to lose all those fish. But as we began to pull the nets up, the nets began to break. I mean there were just so many fish that the nets couldn't even hold them. My jaw must have been on the bottom of the boat when I looked at all those fish. It was amazing. All those fish.

But then something hit me all of a sudden. It wasn't the fish that were amazing. No it was Jesus that was amazing. We hadn't just lucked out and hit a school of fish. Jesus had made this happen. And if Jesus had made this happen, He was no ordinary guy. I must admit that I still did quite know who He has at this point, but I did know one thing. He was of God and much holier than I. As soon as I realized that I fell almost instinctively at Jesus feet. I didn't deserve to be with Him. It was as if in His holy presence, my sin just seemed so evident. I cried out, Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man. To be honest I had went from being amazed to being terrified pretty quickly. I just felt so unworthy to even be in Jesus presence. He was holy and I was not.

Jesus knew how terrified I was. And He spoke to me. He said two words that were worth a thousand. "Fear not," He said. Jesus meant more than just not to be afraid. It was his way beginning to tell me that my sins were forgiven. That was the only way I could be with Jesus and not feel completely unworthy. Jesus taught me that He would make me worthy to be with him. He would not let my sins remain and stand in the way of us being together. I didn't understand exactly how He would do that until days after Easter morning. You see, after Jesus died on the cross, we weren't sure what to do. So we went back to being fisherman. But then it happened again. Jesus stood on the shore, although we didn't know it was him, and told us again where to place our nets. And we caught another huge load of fish. Right then I knew it was Jesus. He was alive! And if He was alive, then we didn't have to go back to being just fishermen. Well, I am still a fisherman, but I don't cast nets anymore looking for fish, I cast out God's word looking for people.

I know you weren't there that day, but I hope you believe me that it happened. This is not just some fish story I made up. Rather it was the first way I began to learn who Jesus was and what He had come to do. Jesus had come to save me from my sins. I know you have sins in your life too, and maybe at times you don't feel like you are worthy to be with Jesus either. Well, fear not! You are right that you don't

deserve it. Neither did I. But God has made sure that you will get to be with Jesus forever even though you don't deserve it. That is why Jesus came. He went to the cross to die for me and for you. And because he rose, you and I get to live forever with him in heaven.

I am a fisherman; I go around telling people about Jesus and all that he did for us. I hope that you believe. And if you do, join me in telling others. You can help cast out the net of God's word to catch more people for Jesus here in Ellsworth. You can also pray for and help those fishers of men that are all over the world like John Mehl. Any way that you help get the word out is great! Because unlike the nets that we had, Jesus kingdom is big enough to hold everyone. So cast out his word, and be amazed at the catch. I know you will be. Amen.