



See Deep Fishing – Touchpoint for February 5, 2025

Luke 5:1-11 (NRSVUE) Jesus Calls the First Disciples

TOUCH POINT

5 Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” ⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’s knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Grace and peace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

Jesus is choosing his first apprentices. Why didn’t he pick from the eager ones “pressing into him?” Simon and his buddies were parked off the shore, washing their fishing nets. Were they also wanting to listen to Jesus, but their time was divided? Was the life of a fisherman—trying to make money for their family—also pressing in on them? Was Jesus annoyed that they were washing their nets while everyone else was captivated by him? It doesn’t appear to be the case. Jesus must have known their hearts and met them where they were.

In the shallow water, things seemed bleak for Simon. No fish, no income, and no way to pay the taxes.

They had already given up and are in the shallow waters of their own ability and expertise. It’s over. They had already washed the ocean junk from their nets! They were tired and discouraged.

Jesus instructed them to head back out. A professional fisherman knows the rhythm of the waters, and it was time to call it. The thought of returning again empty-handed and re-washing the nets must have felt overwhelming. Simon must have already resigned himself to the disappointment of no food for the family and no way of paying the bills.

Jesus sends them back out. This time he sends them into the deep waters—unfamiliar rhythms, wrong time of day, and an area already trawled.

Nobody would have blamed the fishermen if they’d said no to Jesus. At least I hope nobody would blame them. There have been times I’ve said, “I’m done” after successive tries at something.

When I was 8 years old, I was hospitalized with what they called a “fever of unknown origin.” High fevers would come on me, and I would hallucinate. I was hospitalized, and they did multiple tests, including a spinal tap. A long needle would be inserted into the base of my spine to draw fluid from the brain— an extremely painful process done without anesthesia.

I asked the doctor if it would hurt. He said, “Yes I’m sorry, and we’ll need you to be as still as possible.” I was strapped to the bed, and there were nurses on both sides to hold me still. The first attempt was more than I could bear. I yelled with a cry that must have echoed down the halls. The nurses comforted me and let me know it was ok to let it out.

The pain would stop, and I’d think we were done. But we were not. I would rest, and then they would say, “One more time.” It took six attempts to get a fluid sample from my spine into the syringe.

After the fifth time, I asked them to stop. The doctor said, “One more time, and we’ll get it. I promise.”

Do you think I believed him? After five times of excruciating pain and exhaustion? They assured me it wouldn’t hurt this time. Are you kidding me? There’s no way I could trust them. They said they could stop now, but that they would eventually need to start all over on another day.

Being a child, I felt so much pressure to make the decision to allow another try or quit. The doctors would not go forward without me. Or so I thought. When I finally said, “Ok, let’s do it,” the doctor said, “We’re done, we got it!” The nurses smiled and told me it was over. They’d distracted me with conversation, knowing my back and spine were so numb, I wouldn’t feel anything. It seemed impossible, but it was over.

Many times, the children of Israel lost trust and faith in their journey to the promised land. They saw their circumstances and said, “No way! We were better off enslaved than being in the shallow waters of powerlessness.” There was no way forward in the darkness of their circumstances.

Did I trust my doctor? No. Did the fishermen trust Jesus? I seriously doubt it. Purely based on human nature, I’m sure they had their doubts.

Did Jesus expect to be trusted? I don’t think so. Perhaps trust is overrated. Demanding trust from new acquaintances is cultish, if you ask me. To follow does not require a lack of doubt. Nobody would trust someone they just met, so why would God demand trust as we embark on a journey of knowing Him?

Let’s imagine you meet a guy for the first time, and after a nice conversation, you say, “Hey, you seem like a great guy! Here’s the keys to my car. Why don’t you take my wife for a spin?” No, I would hope no one would think that’s a good idea.

Trust is the fruit of a relationship that grows. So it is with the invisible mystery we call God. We begin walking with God, and trust grows. Deep intimacy develops through these experiences together.

Jesus invites the new disciples out of their shallow waters and into the deep.

Psalms 42:7 says, “Deep calls unto deep.”

The deepest longing of the disciples is touched by the deepest longing of God for them.

Jesus took them to the deep places—places where fish cannot be seen with the naked eye. Deep called unto deep, and the result was unexpected.

What an initial experience in a transformational journey for the first disciples.

When our doubt-filled willingness meets with the unpredictable and natural power of God, the ocean's deep waters collide, and a way is made out of no way.

Jesus says to them, in the least convenient of times, "Come with me, and I'll teach you to do way beyond what you could ever imagine. I will teach you how to go beyond the shallow, superficial, and find those others who are wallowing in hopelessness."

What fishing lure might they use to catch people? The same one Jesus did—touching the deep longing within all humanity. An invitation into the deep waters of uncertainty and abundance.

Jesus chose weary, tired fishermen to reach out to others like themselves. He didn't call those pressing in. He called to be his disciples, those who were at the end of their efforts. Discouraged people—the overtaxed, under paid, and over stressed. The unnoticed, and the weary, ready for a different way of doing and being. The ones willing to say the old ways just don't cut it anymore.

Many of us are in the shallow waters, where we see no visible means of change. Maybe like Simon, you've come to the end of your day. The end of your capacity. Perhaps the mystery we call God is calling. Perhaps the end of our capacities is the beginning of God's power and abundance. Maybe the end of our own efforts, when we dock and wash our nets, is when we can hear the words, "Follow me." Perhaps the way Simon answered was just fine. It was honest. In effect, he said, "Based on my own experience and expertise, I don't like our odds, Jesus. But hey, you're the Rabbi. Go for it."

The rest is Mystery!

Amen

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)
Be Still, know that I am God

Lamb of God

(Salt of the Sound)
Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God (hear our prayer),
Lamb of God, Grant us peace (hear us pray).
This we pray.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Come O Lord and Set Us Free

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Come, O Lord and set us free. Give/Bring your people peace.

Come, O Lord and set us free. Come Lord Jesus, Come.

1. And take our guilt away. Give us your pardon Lord.
2. Free from our self-obsession. Free from each fond possession.
3. Free to affirm each other...as sister and as brother

Reshape the world you made. Let what your hand created...be always celebrated.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

Benediction

May God Keep and Bless You

(Marty Haugen)

May God keep and bless you, and nothing distress you. May God guard and guide you and friends walk beside you. May God's arms surround you and fear not confound you. May God's light shine through you and night not subdue you. As you sleep and wake may your prayers arise as love songs for God, whose love never dies, whose love never dies.

Amen