

LET DOWN YOUR NETS AGAIN (Lk. 5:1-11)

Luke records, **Lk. 5:1** And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him [*Jesus*] to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret [*Sea of Galilee*]. ... Jesus was a sensation! The crowds came from all across the region to see what He was doing and hear what He was saying. He began His ministry - at home' in Galilee, **Lk. 4:14** And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a *fame* of him through all the region round about. **15** And he taught in their synagogues, being *glorified of all*. ... He was a local 'wonder', a phenomenon. The people were awestruck with Him, and His message was like none they had ever heard. He preached in local synagogues, and in the open-air. And no matter where He preached, every venue was 'packed out'! ... And His message was always the same and the people's testimony, - both friend and foe, - was **Jn. 7:46** Never man spake like this man ... **Mt. 22:33** And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine [*ἰδιδάχη, teaching*]. ... **Lk. 4:32** And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. ... **Mt. 7:28** And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: **29** For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ... **Mk. 11:18** And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. ... **Mt. 15:31** **31** the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. ... *Tens of thousands* were regularly listening to the word of God coming from His lips.

And this is a tremendously exciting narrative for you can see how the well-educated Luke records the account using a very basic and simple child-like repetition of the word, "And" (v.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10,11,12). ... He was so *excited* with Jesus. ... Jesus was standing on the shore, surrounded by all the people, **2** And [*He*] saw two ships [*fishing boats*] standing [*moored*] by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. ... Two boats were tied up on the shore, and the fishermen were cleaning their nets, as was their practice after every fishing expedition.

And then the Gospel writer relates how Jesus walked over, and He, - a carpenter from Nazareth, up in the hills, - proceeded to tell these experienced fishermen they should go out again to fish, and also *where* to fish. **3** And he [*Jesus*] entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed [*requested*] him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught [*ἰδιδάσκω*] the people out of the ship. ... The amazing interaction of the Saviour with people. ... The boat wasn't too far out ... just far enough so the crowds in their enthusiasm were no longer 'pressing upon Him', **4** Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down [*lower*] your nets for a draught. ... When you

think of it, it was an imposition instructing the fishermen to go out to sea again for it was early in the morning, and they hadn't long come in, they were tired, they wanted to finish tending to their nets so they could go home and sleep (v.2).

They were only after pulling their nets up out of the sea, and into the boat ... brought the boat to shore, with no fish in the nets ... and then for a *Carpenter* to come and tell them to go out fishing again, and *how* to fish! ... What does *He* know about fishing?! ... Jesus had proved how He could draw the crowds, but fishing was *their* business! Simon had never heard anything about Jesus *fishing*, ... They could politely have been thinking He is a nice Man and a good Teacher but what does He know about catching fish?! Nevertheless, Jesus said to the leading fisherman, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. ... You will draw in a haul [*ἄγρα*] of fish, and they obeyed for His word carried such authority. ... They set sail again, after having been out fishing all night!

Simon decided to 'speak his mind' though, ⁵ Master *Ἐπιστάτης*, *overseer, superintendent*, we have toiled all the night [*we are weary, 'done out'*], and have taken nothing. We are exhausted! ... You could imagine Simon going on to say, With due respect, You know nothing about it. It is our livelihood, and from young boys, we have been taught how to fish. We know where all the good places are, and we know how to cast the nets. We know the different species of fish. There is nothing You can tell us we don't know! ... But that is *not* what Simon said ... because it wasn't Simon Peter in control, but Jesus.

And so, with the Lord working in his heart, instead of arguing, Simon was compelled to add, nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. ... I don't understand, Jesus, but I'll do what You tell me. ... Jesus, I'm placing my faith in You, and even though I'm weary, but because You tell me, I'll gather my net, put it into the boat, push out into the sea, and at thy word I will let down the net.

"Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word" ... Is that what was happening? ... Only 'kind-of'. ... Simon was a headstrong individual and, as we discover throughout the Gospels, he didn't always take well to being told what to do. He had his own opinions, and he didn't always readily agree with those around him ... and in this situation, it is obvious he had not given Jesus his full commitment.

... Peter boarded his boat and threw one of his nets onto the deck, leaving his other nets on the shore. What was it Jesus told him though? ... Launch out into

the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. ... But Simon only half-heartedly responded, at thy word I will let down the *net*.

He sailed out and when he got to a certain place, Jesus told him to cast the net overboard. ... Peter obeyed, and cast the net into the sea. We could imagine the way he did it for he and his fellow-fishermen had been doing all night. He wasn't expecting anything ... it was simply to content Jesus. *However*, this time there was a *massive* difference! ⁶ And when they had this done, they inclosed [*netted*] a great [*πολύς*] multitude [*πλήθος*] of fishes: and their *net* brake.

Their *net* brake, it ripped, it came apart! ... Why had Jesus allowed *that* to happen?! ... They were in a panic. They knew all there was to know about fishing, but they were now acting like amateurs. ... Here was their problem, they had not adequately listened to the Master when He clearly instructed them, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught (v.4). ... They had not listened closely enough for they had not taken what Jesus had said.

Implicit in what Jesus was telling them was this. ... Simon, take *all* of your nets from the shore because you are going to need them *all*. But Simon thought he knew better than the Lord for his response was half-hearted ... Simon decided he knew better, and he only took *one* net with him. And what happened? One net proved not to be enough! ... Jesus knew *one* net would not be enough, and that is why He said, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets... not let down your net. Jesus did not give Simon permission to fish whatever way he wanted, but Jesus was specific, - He was in charge, - and He already knew Simon would be blessed with a great catch!

Simon was not listening closely, or he was too tired, or he thought he knew better than the Carpenter from Nazareth for he went out fishing his own way, - not the Lord's way ... not prepared to take the Lord at His word for he (Simon) thought he knew better! The Lord had told him to bring his *nets* for he would need them *all* ... but the problem was Simon was trusting in himself and not in the Lord.

And that is why he only let down the one net. It looked as if he was being obedient, but in reality, he was holding back and he was not doing what the Lord was instructing him, and he was in danger of jeopardising the blessing. It never 'works' when we set out not listening to the Lord. In His will, it looks as if He is taking us along a different track, when there might be an easier or less strenuous one more available. The way He would take us is not one we would

choose. We are tired, like the fishermen. Sometimes we are despondent, discouraged, disheartened. We have been ‘fishing’, and it seems we have little to show for it ... but the Lord knows, and the Lord has not finished with us. ... From our perspective, Lord, we have tried, but we have come to the conclusion there is nothing more we can do. We are going to ‘pull up the nets’, leave them on the shore, and we are going to go home for we’re finished’.

But *the Lord* was in the boat with them. He was not on the land, on His way back to Nazareth, but He was with them. They had heard Him preaching on the land when He stood in their local synagogue and read from the prophecy of Isaiah, **Lk. 4:31** And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. **32** And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. ... The people were enthralled with Him. They could not get enough, and He went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee and He saw Peter, and asked him if He could board his boat and push out ‘just a little bit’ into the water and speak to the people from the sea. ... From the land to the *sea*. ... That was not what the leaders of the synagogue did ... but that was the way Jesus chose to do. ... What a privilege it was for Peter. ... And then after Jesus had finished, what another great blessing to ‘go fishing with Jesus’!

The one net Simon took out with him was not enough and all those fish were going to be lost! What waste of a great opportunity! The net was filled to capacity and overflowing with fish because one net was not enough. Peter still thought he had the answer, for seizing the moment, ⁷ they [*Simon and Andrew*] beckoned unto their partners [¹⁰ *James, and John*], which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. ... Simon looked to his friends, rather than to Jesus Who was in the boat with him. We are going to be okay now for we are sharing the load! It is a good thing to work together ... only when your confidence is in the Lord, for they were wrong again, they came, and filled both the ships, *so that they began to sink [drown]*. ... They were in a worse dilemma for *both* their boats were sinking, and their business and livelihood was in jeopardy!

What a sad scene! There on the sinking boat Simon had to let go of the net he had been trusting in, ⁸ When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees ... In desperate circumstances, the Saviour is never far away, - Christ in the vessel, - and Simon Peter cried out to the Lord, ⁸ Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord *Κύριος*, ... Lord, for all I know, I know *nothing*, and I am *nothing* compared to You. He had discovered he had to bow at the feet of Jesus Who *was* in control from the very moment, - and even before, - he had set sail from the shore. ... When he first addressed Jesus, he referred to Him as ‘master’, and

the word he used would correspond to our word ‘boss’, as in the workplace. However, the word Simon Peter uses now is “*Lord*”, and *truly* the *Master*.

He was learning, and indeed, they *all* had learned through their disobedience, - Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They could easily have drowned as their boats were taking in the water and beginning to sink. But Jesus was with them, and He was there when they confessed how they could not do without Him.

In our own situation, we’ve been working hard for many years. Sometimes the waters have been calm, and we have enjoyed the scenery. Sometimes the waters have been choppy, and we have been glad to arrive back on the shore. We are out on the sea again ... and the view looks daunting. Like it was with Simon and Andrew, it seems there are so few to call upon ... so few, - only James and John who are willing to come to our aid. Workers were scarce on the Sea of Galilee that morning too for there is no mention of anyone else coming to help *except Jesus*. ... ¹⁰ And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ... ¹¹ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

They followed Him through the first year of His open ministry, when the crowds flocked to His side, and they also followed when His enemies were plotting against Him, and even though they did desert Him in Gethsemane, they returned ... and by the grace of God, through them the Church was established in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ultimately across the globe.

While yet the morn is breaking, I thank my God once more,
 Beneath Whose care awaking, I find the night is o’er.
 I thank Him that He calls me To life and health anew;
 I know, whate’er befalls me, His care will still be true.

O gracious Lord, direct us, Thy doctrine pure defend,
 From heresies protect us, And for Thy Word contend,
 That we may praise Thee ever, O God, with one accord,
 And say: The Lord, our Saviour, Be evermore adored.

Oh, grant us peace and gladness, Give us our daily bread,
 Shield us from grief and sadness, On us Thy blessings shed.
 Grant that our whole behaviour, In truth and righteousness,
 May praise Thee, Lord, our Savior, Whose holy name we bless.

And gently grant Thy blessing That we may do Thy will,
No more Thy ways transgressing, Our proper task fulfil,
With Peter's full assurance Let down our nets again.
Success will crown endurance If faithful we remain.

Johannes Muhlmann (1573-1613)