

LAUNCH OUT! Luke 5:1-11

Today is a special day for a special group of young people, and they are our seniors. It's been a long time since many of us walked across that platform and received our high school diploma, but if you are a high school graduate think back for a moment about your feelings in the days that followed. For me they were mixed. It was good to have reached the goal of graduation, but I sure was going to miss all the good times that I had with my friends in my school and youth group activities. And to be honest, I wasn't too excited about leaving the comfortable, feathered nest that I'd had for the last eighteen years. But I was getting kicked out when I left for college that August, like it or not. And some of you can remember having the same feelings as I had.

Well, seniors, this big, huge world that can be so intimidating and so unkind is shouting out to you today, "Here I come, ready or not!" And so I want to ask you the obvious question, "Are you ready?" Are you ready for the challenges of preparing for a career, for finding God's choice for a mate, and for finding your place in His kingdom's work for you? Today we are going to see what God did with one man who was wrestling with just one of these weighty issues, and how He wants to do the same thing with you.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Luke 5:1-11. It had been a long night for Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, who was most likely with him. They had fished and fished all up and down the banks of the Sea of Galilee and had not caught one single fish. And now they are washing their nets and getting ready to go home and get some sleep. But something else is going on just down the shore line that changes their plans completely. A large group of people have crowded around the new rabbi in Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth, for a sea side scroll study, and there are pressing in so closely that many cannot see or hear Him. So Jesus walks over to Simon's boat, gets in, and asks Simon to put out just a little ways off shore so all could see and hear. And so Simon obliges, and Jesus sits down and begins to teach.

Now, after Jesus finishes His lesson He looks at Simon and says, "Simon, launch out into the deep water for a catch of fish". And you know the rest of the story. Simon reluctantly agreed, and when he did, he and Andrew and their partners caught so many fish their nets broke and their boat almost sank. And beloved, in this fish miracle there are numerous life lessons that all of us need to know, young or old. And I want to share some of them with you today, and the first one is, **when Jesus Christ comes into our lives, He comes not only to save, but to put us to work.**

If you are a child of God today, just like Jesus got into Simon's boat, one day in a similar manner Jesus entered your life. He forgave your sins and saved you from eternal hell. But beloved, Jesus did not save you for no other purpose than to rescue

you from torment. He saved you to join Him in His work. Paul writes in Eph. 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we walk in them”. When Jesus entered into Simon’s boat that morning, Simon joined Jesus in His work. Jesus asked Simon for the use of his boat as a teaching platform and Simon said, “Sure, Lord.” And you can be sure that Jesus is calling you to use whatever gifts and talents that He has blessed you with to serve Him as well.

Most of you have heard us speak of our church’s purpose statement. Can you quote it? “Preaching Christ and building His church”. Let’s say it together. **“Preaching Christ and building His church”**. That is what we are all about at Grant’s Creek. And do you know how we do that? We do that just like Simon did that day. Simon was willing for Jesus to use the resources he had, for Jesus to use his passion if you will, for Jesus to do His work. Simon was passionate about fishing. It was his livelihood and he had all the tools he needed to be successful. And Simon was willing to let Jesus use one of the tools of his trade, his boat, for the work of God’s kingdom.

Beloved, there is not a believer alive whom God has not given resources with which to serve Him. All of us have at least one spiritual gift, most of us more than one. It might be the gift of administration, or the gift of evangelism, or the gift of faith, or the gift of giving, or the gift of helps, or the gift of mercy, or the gift of teaching. But whatever it is, when we use our gift we are good at it and people are blessed by it. And God has given most of us natural gifts such as athletic ability, arranging flowers, carpentry skills, cooking skills, electrical aptitude, financial acumen, or singing or playing an instrument. And just about every one of us has some sort of hobby that we enjoy that’s linked to our natural abilities. But our great God will take any of these and use them to bring great glory to His name if we will just say, “Yes, Lord, use me in whatever way that you will”.

I heard the testimony of a young man a few months ago who has taken his passion for surfing and made a ministry out of it, and he is sharing the gospel with many surfers who would otherwise never hear it. And every week some of you are using your gifts and skills around the church doing things that help to keep this old church being a lighthouse on this old hill year after year. But beloved, the point is, when Jesus comes into your life, He will always call you to serve Him in some way.

There is another truth from this fish miracle I want us to notice. And that is, **many times Jesus’ commands are not what we expect or when we expect.** When Jesus wound up His teaching session and dismissed the people that day, I can just see Simon and Andrew starting to row back to the shore, ready to tie up the boat, go home and crash. But then Jesus says to Simon, “Launch back out into the deep and cast your nets, and you’ll have yourself a catch”. And Jesus’ words certainly caught Simon by surprise. For one thing, Jesus knew that they had been fishing all night, were tired and ready to go home. And for another, even though Jesus was a

carpenter, surely He knew that commercial fishermen fish at night, not in the daytime, and not in the deep water but in shallow, near the bank. So Jesus was telling Simon, who was the professional, to break all the rules when He told him to launch out into the deep.

Beloved, let me tell you something about miracles. Miracles are never done in an ordinary way. Miracles are always done in a way that you don't expect. That's what makes it a miracle! It wasn't the ordinary thing for the army of Israel to walk around Jericho for seven days without saying a word, then all shout at once and the walls of the city come crashing down. It wasn't an ordinary thing for Gideon to reduce the size of his troops from 32,000 to 300 before he went out to fight an army of 135,000 Midianites. It wasn't the ordinary thing for Elisha to tell Naaman to go down to the Jordan River and dip seven times to be healed of his leprosy. It wasn't the ordinary thing for Jesus to tell the servants at the wedding at Cana to go dip some water out of the waterpots and take it to the head waiter as if it were wine. And in our own time and in our own community, it was not an ordinary thing for God to speak to Vicki Avery and then to Dennis and say, "I want you to begin a ministry to unwed mothers in your own home". And who would have ever believed that seven years later the Jean Browning Home could be caring for up to six unwed mothers in a brand new \$300,000 facility of their own?

So seniors, let me challenge you this morning. Don't waste your life playing around in shallow water! Don't be satisfied with the ordinary, with the mundane, with the status quo, and with making a living but leaving no legacy. That is the reason this country is in the sorry shape that it is in. Because too many professing Christians are satisfied with mediocrity. They do enough just to get by. They don't want to be a person of excellence on their job; they just want to get their paycheck every week. When God opens up a challenge for them to do something outstanding they put up the excuse that Simon gave Jesus when Jesus told him to go out fishing again. Peter was satisfied with mediocrity that day, and he said, "Master, it won't work. We've tried it already and we caught nothing". And that's the way most people live their lives. They are satisfied with mediocrity, satisfied with playing around in shallow water.

But here's what I'm challenging you to do today. Cut the word "mediocre" out of your vocabulary. Hear the voice of Jesus saying to you today, "Launch out into the deep!" Hear Him calling you to something that will stretch you, something that is beyond your ability to accomplish without His mighty power working in you, something that is miraculous! But let me caution you, make sure it is **Jesus' voice** you are hearing and not your own, and that means living close to Jesus, living in His Word, living in a spirit of prayer, and being faithful to church. But the key to Simon's miracle was in verse 5. There he said to Jesus, "Master...at Your word I will let down the net". But seniors, when you know Jesus speaking to you, then launch out and let down your net for a miracle. And remember, miracles don't happen in an

ordinary way, so don't be afraid that what God calls you to launch out for makes no sense at all to conventional wisdom, for it won't. Don't be surprised when your friends or even your family tries to discourage you, and don't be surprised if they laugh at you. They laughed at David and ridiculed him when he said that he was going to slay Goliath. Just always remember, it's in the deep water where the miracles happen.

And that brings us to the next life lesson God would have us to learn this morning. And that is, **God's miracles are greater than we could ever imagine.** When Simon saw the draught of fish that he, Andrew, and their partners had hauled in, he was astonished. Look at verse 9. As long as he had been around the fishing business he had never seen a catch like this one. And he probably wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't seen it with his own eyes. It was way, way off the charts of his thinking. Oh, but friends, that's where God operates, in realms of abundance that we can't even imagine. Paul writes that God is able to do exceeding, abundantly more than we can ask or even think (Eph. 3:20). For He is the God Who owns the universe, this vast, immeasurable universe in which our solar system is nothing more than a speck. And if our solar system is but a speck, do you see how immeasurably small that makes you and me? But God has every created thing at His disposal to share with His children if He chooses.

Suppose for a moment that mice could talk. And suppose for a moment that a tiny little mouse crept up to a silo that contained 100 tons of grain. And that little mouse spoke to the kindhearted farmer standing next to his silo and said, "Sir, could you please spare me just a handful of grain to feed me and my wife and child today?" Would the farmer ever miss that handful of grain should he give it to him? But what if he decided to give him a bucketful? Would he miss it? What if that farmer said, "Little mouse, I just feel like blessing you today. I'm going to feed you and your family for at least a year. I'm going to give you a barrelful of grain." Would he miss a barrelful of grain he gave that little mouse? No! And do you think that your Heavenly Father would be deprived, if from the infinite riches of His universe He poured out a miracle upon you so great that you could not fathom it? No! And Jesus is crying out to you seniors, and to every one of us today, "Launch out into the deep for a blessing that will astound you!"

But I want us to quickly see another life lesson from Simon's fish miracle. And seniors, it is especially critical that you get this on the front end of your life. And the lesson is, **God's plan for you is greater than fishing.** Jesus told Simon in verse 10 that from then on he would be doing something a whole lot more fulfilling than catching fish. He would be catching men. But Jesus says to every child of God of His today, "I have something better for you than what you do to make a living. It's so much better than your business career, or your medical practice, or your teaching career, or even your television career, or whatever your dream job might be. It is catching men alive. That's the meaning of the original language in verse 10.

Rescuing men out of the sea of sin and death and bringing them alive to Jesus Christ.

Seniors, listen to the words of God this morning. There is no greater purpose in life than that! Oh, listen, it is not wrong to want to be the best you can be in your career. In fact, when you do it will bring great glory to God if you are living your life for Him. But God wants every Christian to have the same attitude that a CEO had I've told some of you about before. A head hunter was sitting in his office one day talking to him about a new job and asked him, "What's your primary goal in life?" And this corporate executive who made no telling how much money shot back without hesitation, "My goal is to go to Heaven and take as many people with me as I can." Praise God!! That man's main business was the main thing – catching men alive. And that's God's purpose for you.

But let me tell you what is going to happen if you purpose to obey Jesus and make your primary purpose in life winning souls to Him. The devil is going to throw every temptation in the book at you to keep you from doing it, every allurements of the flesh that seems good to you. And you'll find yourself drifting along with the tide of the culture, only thinking about yourself, with your only goal in life being to fulfill the American dream - having a house, two cars and a boat, a pretty wife and smart kids, or for you young ladies, Mr. good-looking-of-the-world and smart kids. And let me say that many young people who claim to be Christians are turning away from the commands of God and what they know is right to do it. Now there is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to own your own home unless God specifically tells you to live as a nomad like Abraham did. And it's hard for most families to get along without two cars in today's world. And God would never command you to go out and marry a girl who was so ugly the dogs howled at her. But seniors, let me tell that if your life goals are nothing more than a beautiful spouse and a home and a super dad or soccer mom life with few problems, then even if you reach them you will be a failure. Because Jesus had such a better plan, a plan for great influence and great good for the next billion years, catching men alive, but you will have missed it!

And seniors, let me tell you another thing you can expect from Satan if you purpose to obey Jesus and seek to walk the narrow path of catching men alive. Get ready to him to try to scare you out of your wits. Get ready for him to come to you and say to you, "Are you crazy? Don't you know that you're throwing your life away? Don't you know that you'll be miserable for the rest of your life if you go through with this stupid idea? Look around you. Who else is doing it?" And he's right about that. Very, very few Christians' main purpose in life is to catch men alive. And if you are not strong in your walk with Jesus you'll let fear crush all of the awesome miracles that God has planned for you. That's the reason that in verse 10 Jesus said to Simon, and to you, "Don't be afraid!" And from seniors to senior adults, I say to all of you today, don't let fear stop you from launching out into the deep! For God says in Isaiah, "Fear not, I am with you!" (Is. 41:10).

There is a final lesson that we must see from Simon's fishing miracle before we close. And the lesson is, **launching out in the deep and catching men alive is costly.**

It is interesting that this is not the first time that Jesus issued a call for Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him.

Matt. 4:20, Mark 1:18 – the exact same words – “They immediately left their nets and followed Him”. But they soon went back to fishing. What was the difference this time? They forsook all