

## The Call of Simon Peter

<sup>1</sup> While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. <sup>2</sup> He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup> After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. <sup>7</sup> They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." <sup>9</sup> For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, <sup>10</sup> and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." <sup>11</sup> When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)



*Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew | Lorenzo Veneziano, 1370 | Staatliche Museen, Berlin | PD-US*

### Context

For the two previous weeks in the lectionary cycle, Jesus has been in Nazareth engaging the citizens of his own hometown (4:14-30). As Jesus indicated, *no prophet is accepted in his own native place* (v.24). Leaving Nazareth, Jesus moved on to Capernaum. Again he amazed people while teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. While present, *there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon* (v.33). Jesus casts the demon from the man, again amazing the people: *For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.* (v.36) Also while in Capernaum, Jesus cured Simon's mother-in-law (vv.38-39) and all manner of people *sick with various diseases* (v.40) and cast out other

demons (v.41).

*<sup>42</sup> At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them. <sup>43</sup> But he said to them, “To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent.” <sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

This is the first place in Luke where Jesus mentions proclaiming the Kingdom of God as a compelling necessity – something that will become a hallmark of later sections of Luke’s gospel.

The Capernaum ministry consists of four scenes in which Jesus performs the first healings and exorcisms in the Gospel of Luke. Luke’s account of the healings in Capernaum makes several connections. It connects the healings and exorcisms with Jesus’ teaching so that the power of his words is dramatically demonstrated in his mighty works. By implication, where his words are heard, there the power that was manifested in the miracles continues to be active. As Culpepper notes [112-113], “Running through both the Nazareth and the Capernaum episode, however, is the warning that the power of God cannot be possessed, contained, or limited for our own purposes. It moves on, and it is always reaching across the barriers that separate communities and peoples from one another. The mighty works of Jesus’ ministry, however, are a manifestation of the power of the Spirit. As the Lord’s anointed, Jesus was empowered to extend the work of the prophets and begin the work of the kingdom. What was stated in the reading from Isaiah 61 saw its first small beginnings in the healings in Capernaum. God was moving to free persons from the debilitating and dehumanizing conditions that prevented human beings from living as God willed life to be. In that respect, the text gives up a significant clue when as a result of Jesus’ healings, demons flee from those who have been delivered from their illness or impairment. The healings are theologically significant, therefore, because they convey important insights into God’s intention for human life and God’s unrelenting efforts to free captives and give sight to the blind. Healing and deliverance are manifestations of the work of the kingdom.”

Jesus continues his Galilean ministry near Capernaum and Nazareth in the territory around the Lake, here called Gennesaret after the fertile plain on its northwest shore. To this point Jesus has acted alone, unaccompanied by disciples – that however is about to change.

### **The Call of Simon**

***Writing with Intent.*** Christian tradition and popular biblical opinion is that St. Luke was a physician. I occupy the minority camp on that matter. There have been lots of studies comparing his writing and language to known physicians of his age. There is nothing about this Gospel (or Acts of the Apostles) that points to a physician. But as many have pointed out, there is a lot that points to another occupation: rhetorical historian (and yes, he could have been both...). As the rhetorical historian, he writes with a purpose and intent. Green [230] writes: “Within his overall narrative strategy, the initial purpose of this episode is to secure for Luke’s audience the nature of appropriate response to the ministry of Jesus. Simon’s obedience and declaration of his sinfulness, and especially the final note that Simon, James, and John “left everything and followed” contrast both with the earlier “amazement” of the crowds and with the questions and opposition characteristic of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the later episodes of this chapter. His further statement, “Go away from me, Lord,” contrasts even more sharply with attempts by people at Nazareth and Capernaum, as it were, to keep Jesus to themselves.”

The intent can be seen in the structure Luke carefully assembles. This narrative, which we commonly refer to as “calling disciples” actually has no moment in which Jesus says “follow me.” Rather the narrative takes on the form of an extended pronouncement story centered around Jesus’ challenge to

Simon in v.10. The larger unit is a composite constructed from three distinct parts: the setting by the lake (5:1–3), for which Luke echoes Mark 4:1–2; a miracle story—the catch of fish (5:4–7), for which there is a parallel in John 21:3–8; and the call of the fishermen (5:8–11), for which carries the resonance of Mark 1:16–20. The first three verses set the scene and introduce the characters. The catch of fish introduces the first dialogue between Jesus and Simon Peter and prepares for the call to discipleship at the end of the scene. Isolating the dialogue serves to highlight its role in this scene:

Jesus: “*Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch.*”

Simon: “*Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing. But at your command, I will lower the nets.*”

Simon: “*Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!*”

Jesus: “*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.*”

Following the narrative technique of framing scenes or episodes by means of entrances and departures that Luke uses repeatedly, the scene is introduced by a reference to the crowd’s coming to Jesus and closes with the report that the fishermen left everything to follow Jesus. The disciples depart, not from the holy places of the Temple or synagogue, but from the ordinary of everyday life – called by “*the word of God*” (the first time so described in Luke; v.1). It is important to note that here, as the disciples are being called to their new vocation, that it is also the beginning of the *traditio*, the handing on, of the ministry of this word that will continue in the church (Acts 4:31; 6:2).

**Teaching the crowds.** <sup>1</sup> *While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.* <sup>2</sup> *He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.* <sup>3</sup> *Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.* <sup>4</sup> *After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”*

Twice in this section “the crowd” is mentioned. Who are they? They are people who come to Jesus to hear the word of God (v. 1). They are people who are taught by Jesus (v. 3), but are they people willing to leave everything and follow Jesus (v. 11)? In our text, there is a difference between the crowd (*ochlos*) and the fishermen (*halieus*). The crowd listens to Jesus. The fishermen act. The crowd stays on the land. The fishermen will go out into the deep. At first, Jesus and Simon go out just “a little way from the shore.” Later Jesus will ask Simon to go out to the deep water. Could these be images of different levels of trust in Jesus -- the safety of the land, the slightly more dangerous position of being “*a short distance from the shore,*” and the quite dangerous position of being out in *deep waters*?

Although I have labeled this section as a teaching moment, we actually are not told the content of Jesus’ teaching, but there is perhaps an acute allegory at play in Luke’s writing. The crowds have been listening to the *word of God*, yet we are never told of their reaction to Jesus’ preaching, to the clear miracles of the catch, and one assumes that as the scene ends, the disciples *left everything and followed* Jesus, the crowds were still in place. Perhaps moved, but not moving.

The account begins with a wide-angle view: the press of the crowd leading to Jesus’ teaching in a natural amphitheater from a boat on the lake. Quickly, however, events on the boat move to the forefront and the crowd disappears completely from view. The important interaction here is between Jesus and Peter, who represent the ones who respond positively to Jesus.

**Catching Fish.** <sup>4</sup> *After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower*

*your nets for a catch.*"<sup>5</sup> Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."<sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.<sup>7</sup> They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

From Culpepper [116]: "Fish was one of the staples in first-century Palestine, where more fish was eaten than any other meat (see Luke 11:11; 24:42) and a thriving fishing industry flourished on the Sea of Galilee. Fish was eaten fresh, processed, salted, dried, or pickled, for export. The fish of the Sea of Galilee are of three main varieties: the *cichlidae*, a family of large panfish that includes "St. Peter's fish"; the *cyprinidae*, or carp family; and the *siluridae*, or catfish. The Jews did not eat catfish, however, because it did not have "fins and scales" (Lev 11:9–12; Deut 14:9–10)."

"The various types of nets mentioned in the NT were probably similar to the nets used by Arab fishermen until recent decades. These include (1) the casting net (*amphiblēstron*, Matt 4:18), a circular net that was cast by a wading fisherman; (2) the trammel net (though this word is used generically for various nets [*diktyon*, Matt 4:20]), or a line of three nets hanging from floats, the inner net having a small mesh that trapped the fish; and (3) the drag net (*sagēnē*, Matt 13:47), which could be several hundred yards long. Luke's description of putting out into deep water and letting down nets suggests that the fishermen were using the trammel nets."

In Mark's version of the call of the first disciples (Mark 1:16–20), the scene is shared by two sets of brothers. Here the spotlight is on Simon, with his partners in the background (Andrew is not even mentioned by name). Jesus seems familiar with this group and they know him (see 4:38). While the fishermen are doing their morning cleaning of the nets and hanging them to dry, Jesus uses Simon's boat to distance himself from the crowd a little in order to preach. There are many natural coves that would have formed a natural amphitheater with the water helping to carry his voice. With v.4, the crowd is suddenly gone, and the rest of the scene is interaction and dialogue between Jesus and Simon.

**At Your Word.** The scene has the carpenter's son giving commands to this crew of experienced fishermen – the result is a phenomenal catch of fish. Many scholars give lots of attention to the parallels with John 21:4-8 and, while interesting, is distracting. The Johannine setting is after Jesus' Resurrection and points to the mission of the Church. This Lucan scene is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and points to the initial reception of those who would be disciples.

Jesus tells Simon to put into deep waters (v.4), but following that, all Jesus' words are in the plural, directed to those in the boat along with Peter – yet it is Peter (his boat?) who responds. At the most simple level this scene captures an ancient Christian understanding: the Church as the "bark of salvation" and Peter in command – where even if others doubt, Peter's attitude is "Jesus said it. I believe it. We're doing this." Simon shows what St. Paul will call "the obedience of faith." It was certainly not reason or experience that motivated him to cast his nets back into the water at the instigation of this carpenter from the hill country. Fishing was best at night; if nothing had been caught, daytime fishing was pointless.

Reason and experience aside, why does Simon follow Jesus'... his command, suggestion? There are many translations that say "Yet if you say so..." (NRSV) which misses some of the nuance of the Greek, which literally says, "But upon your word." (Recall v.1: *While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God*). Simon acts as a response to the Word of God. The result was a tremendous load of fish, so great that the nets wearing tearing (v.6) and its weight even threatened to drag under the two boats.

Joel Green [222] advises avoiding the temptation "to find symbolic, allegorical, and mythological meaning

in this episode, with reference to the size of the catch, the boat(s), and so on.” He is among the scholars who see this episode as a type of epiphany account. Characteristics of such accounts are that the person is in the midst of ordinary tasks, the display of divine power is dramatic (burning bush, Transfiguration), but the focus of the account remains on the prophet – or in this case, the apostle. The “stages” of epiphany events are: the reveal (vv.4-7), the reaction (v.8), the reassurance (v.10), and the redirection from ordinary life (v.10). Green sees striking parallels with the call of the prophet Isaiah (6:1-10) who also responds to the Word of God - reading paired with the gospel on the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle C).

**The Reaction.** <sup>8</sup> *When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”* <sup>9</sup> *For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him,* <sup>10</sup> *and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon.*

The focus of these verses is on Simon, now called Simon Peter for the first time in Luke’s gospel – even James, John, and the unmentioned Andrew, are referred as *partners* of Simon. It is here that Luke calls Simon as Peter for the first time, “the Rock,” the name he will later have as the leader of the church. His eyes are opened through his act of faith, and he falls before Jesus. Peter is the first person in the public ministry to call Jesus “Lord” (no longer only “Master”: v. 5). Suddenly we realize that the story has been more than the initial calling of the fishermen disciples. From earliest times the church has seen herself as the “bark of Peter” in which faith in Jesus is tested (Mark 4:35–41; Matt 8:23–27). Jesus chooses Simon’s boat, sending him into deep water and calling for a decision based solely on personal faith. The faith of Simon’s response is what makes him the rock on which the church is built (Matt 16:18).

Simon’s first response to this miracle is worship (falling on his knees before Jesus), unworthiness (“*Depart from me*”), and confession (“*I am a sinful man*”). If nothing else, this indicates that Jesus can and does use people who are unworthy and sinful. His response is the response of one who has come into the very presence of God. In contrast to our somewhat easy familiarity today with the sacred and the casual way we tend to seek and treat religious experience and the “presence” of God, Simon’s response was much more closer to encounters with God seen throughout the Old Testament. The realization that one is in the presence of God calls for a response, not of happiness, but of fear and dread and reverence. So Isaiah, in the Old Testament reading for this Sunday, when he encountered God in a significant way while worshipping in the Temple, responded by crying, “*Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*” (Isa 6:5).

Jesus had confronted Simon with his own inadequacies in the very area that defined who he was as a person, his vocation (fishing). The distance between the power of the one who stood before him contrasted with his own inadequacies pushed Simon to self-examination and confession. Again, this picks up a recurring theme from the Old Testament. Moses confessed his impotence, especially his inability to speak well, as he stood before the burning bush (Ex 3:11-4:17, esp. 4:10). As God came to Solomon in a dream, he admitted that he was not wise enough to govern God’s people (1 King 3:7-9). And at God’s call Jeremiah recognized the inadequacy of his youth (Jer 1:6).

Simon was humbled here in the one area of life where he should be in control. His reaction was to push Jesus away so that he would not have to face his own failure and inadequacy: “*Depart from me Lord!*” It is always easier to push away, or kill, those who bring us face to face with ourselves than it is to face the truth of who we are. This recalls the reaction of the people of Nazareth to Jesus, and anticipates not only the path of Jesus throughout Luke to the crucifixion but also of the disciples themselves through *Acts of the Apostles*. Yet in this moment of humiliation, Simon is able to come face to face with himself and confess, “*I am a sinful man.*” It is this confession that marks a turning point in Simon’s life, and becomes

the definition of faithful response to Jesus (cf. 5:32). The text itself marks this moment there in v.8 when, for the time, he is named “*Simon Peter*.” This is the moment that captures when God claims someone for his own and renames him or her.

In the Lucan narrative this episode serves as a clear counterpoint to the rejection of the Word of Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:21-30). As used by Luke, the incident looks forward to Peter's leadership in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:14; 9:20; 22:31-32; 24:34; Acts 1:15; 2:14-40; 10:11-18; 15:7-12) and symbolizes the future success of Peter as fisher of men (Acts 2:41).

Simon Peter is aware of the distance between himself, a sinner, and the Lord. But Jesus has not come to drive sinners from his presence. He rather associates sinful people with himself in his ministry, if they will put their trust in him. They must leave *everything* (a Lucan stress: 5:28) and follow him. The three stories following this one show Jesus “catching men” (5:11), involving himself with the outcasts and sinners.

***Calling Fishermen?*** *Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”<sup>11</sup> When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.*

Many bibles add a small title to this account: “Calling Fisherman.” In the parallel accounts found in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22, Jesus calls out to Peter, Andrew, James and John, “*Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” Luke’s tradition tells us a, perhaps, more nuanced account.

Upon a close reading, one sees that Jesus never says “come,” “follow,” or any thing that would be taken as a discipleship command. It is not that Jesus does not take such direct action in Luke’s gospel. Later Jesus will give the command, “Follow me,” to Levi the tax collector (5:27), who like these fishermen, “leaves everything and follows him” (5:11, 28). Rather Luke seems to intend something other than a call story here. It is really a proclamation story. Rather than calling Simon and the others, perhaps Jesus announces to Simon (and only to Simon) what Simon will now be doing (v. 10, “*from now on you will be catching men.*”). Although the task is similar, the words are different from the call stories in Matthew and Mark.

There are certainly some similarities between the “call” stories of Matthew/Mark and Luke, but there is a major difference in Luke’s context. In Luke’s narrative, Jesus is not a stranger to these men. Prior to this fishing event, Jesus has been to Simon’s house and healed his mother-in-law (4:38-39). Because there is no change in location, we assume that later in the evening when Jesus healed all of the sick and demon-possessed who were brought to him, he was still at Simon’s house (4:40-41). It is not until v. 42 that we are told that Jesus departs, which occurs the next morning. In Luke’s narrative, Simon (and perhaps the others?) have already met Jesus and witnessed numerous miracles before the astonishing / miraculous catch of fish. Certainly a first read might too easily conclude that Simon and the others responded to this miraculous catch of fish, a demonstration of power over nature – and on that basis: “*they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.*” Perhaps there is more here that a first read would reveal.

As noted above, this story shares a lot in common with an “epiphany” account in which God, the Word of God, comes to people in the midst of their ordinary, work-a-day lives. Also as noted above, within Luke’s overall narrative strategy, the initial purpose of this episode is to secure for Luke’s audience the nature of appropriate response to the ministry of Jesus. Simon’s obedience and declaration of his sinfulness, and especially the final note that Simon, James, and John “left everything and followed” contrast both with the earlier “amazement” of the crowds and with the questions and opposition characteristics of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the later episodes of this chapter. His further statement, “*Depart from*



*me, Lord,*” contrasts even more sharply with attempts by people at Nazareth [4:23] and Capernaum [4:42] to keep Jesus to themselves.

Jesus responded, not with condemnation, but the assurance “*Don’t be afraid*” (v. 10, singular speaking only to Peter). As Peter lay at Jesus’ feet, reduced to the humility of a child, Jesus responded with the grace and love of a parent reassuring a child who has lost all confidence in themselves that they still have value and worth. In that moment Jesus redefined who Peter was. He would no longer be the fisherman on the Sea of Galilee catching fish for a living, but he would now be living to fish for men. The event here was far more than a miracle of fish; it was nothing less than an encounter with God that forever changed who Peter and the other men in the boats would be. And it became symbolic of the mission of God’s people in the new world of the church. Their value and worth would no longer be defined by their own efforts and success at their vocation, but would be defined by the power of God at work in their lives in carrying out his work in the world.

**“from now on you will be catching men”** Literally, the next line reads: “from the now, you shall be catching alive (*zograo*) people.” The similar phrase in Matthew and Mark reads: “*I will make you (to become) fishermen [halieus] of people.*” (This word for “fishermen” is used in v. 2 of our text.)

The Greek verb translated “catching alive” is a compound word: *zoos* = “alive, living” + *agrao* = “capture, catch”. (This is a verb closely related to *agra* used in vv. 4 and 9 about “catching” the fish). Classically, it also came to mean, “to restore to life and strength, to revive.” Maybe a more literal translation might lead us to a sense of this verse as something like “You will be restoring people to life and strength.” This is perhaps a more captivating thought to people who don’t want to be caught in a net... but what about being “caught up in his or her love” or “captured” by love. Being caught in this way can make us feel really alive and energized – captivated! By the end of our text, Peter and some of his friends are captivated by Jesus. They leave everything and follow him. (Stoffregen)

Culpepper [117] writing on these verses points out that the “fishing” image was not usually a positive one:

The fishermen are themselves caught by Jesus and given a new vocation. In the OT and the Dead Sea Scrolls fishing is used metaphorically for gathering people for judgment (Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14-15; Jer 16:16; 1QH 5:7-8). Seen against this background, the call to the disciples was a commission to gather people for judgment, a theme found in the preaching of John the Baptist (3:7-9). The metaphor of fishing was also common in Greek literature as a metaphor for the activity of philosopher-teachers. In the Gospels, however, the call to become fishers of men becomes a call to gather men and women for the kingdom.

In our evangelical work, this word can remind us that our purpose is to “capture” others in such a way that it is “life-giving” rather than “life-taking”. To use more theological terms, to “capture” them with love and grace and mercy; rather than threats and law and intimidation.

Who are they (and we) to “captivate”? The word is *anthropos* = “people”. However, the context might narrow the field a little. Immediately after this story, Jesus is confronted by a man with leprosy. Jesus touches him (thus taking on his uncleanness) and heals him. In the next story, some men come to Jesus carrying a paralyzed man (*anthropos*). Jesus forgives and then cures him. Next Jesus calls Levi, the tax collector and shares in a feast at his house. A few verses later, Jesus is teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath, a man (*anthropos*) with a withered hand was there (6:6). Jesus cures him. Prior to the fish story, Jesus had exorcised an unclean spirit from a man (*anthropos*) (4:33); healed Simon’s mother-in-law, and cured all who were sick.

This suggests that: “You will be restoring people to life and strength” is at least part of the understanding of “catching people”. Or as Green (*The Gospel of Luke*) suggests that Jesus is identified “as one who crosses boundaries to bring good news to the unworthy” [p. 234].

**“When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him”**

Tannehill (*Luke*, 101 – found in Stoffregen) presents the economic and social implications of this leaving:

“Leaving everything” means leaving the family (cf. 14:26) and leaving one’s means of support. The family was the primary producing unit in antiquity. Whatever economic security there was came through the family. In leaving their families these men were abandoning family responsibilities and their own security. However, we will see later that they moved from an original family to a “surrogate family,” the community of disciples (cf. 8:19-21), as the primary group. This decision did not suddenly make the disciples individuals in the modern sense, but it would take some strength and independence to decide against the group to which society gave the highest value.

The boat returns to land. Those who have experienced Jesus’ power on the lake (an image of baptism?), return changed people. They “leave” everything. The word for “leave” (*aphiemi*) was used earlier of the fever leaving Simon’s mother-in-law (4:39), and the noun form (*aphesis*) twice in the Lucan quote from Isaiah: “*release to the captives*” and “*let the oppressed go free*” (4:18); but most often these words are used of forgiving sins (for example: 5:20, 21, 23, 24).

Perhaps we can restate the action of the fisherman as “freeing themselves from all things” or “being released” from them. Levi the tax collector will do the same thing in v. 28. Might this also illustrate that forgiveness means being freed or released from our sinfulness? That our sins or sinfulness no longer have to control us and that we are freed from whatever hinders us from following God’s call to be and live as God’s children.

From what do we need to be “released” so that we can properly follow Jesus? Following Jesus in 9:23 requires denying oneself = release from one’s own desires. In 9:57-61, three different people wish to follow Jesus, but following him requires leaving comforts behind and family obligations behind. In 18:22, the rich man is unable to leave his possessions in order to follow Jesus. In contrast, Peter indicates that they “have left” (or “been released from”) their own things (*idia* – homes, possessions, property) and followed Jesus. Jesus promises that they will get back much more in this age and eternal life in the age to come (18:28-30).

## Notes

**5:5 Master:** This particular word (*epistata*) occurs only in Luke. (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13). This term was probably understood better by “Most Excellent Theophilus,” than the more Hebrew titles: *didaskalos* or *kyrios* or “rabbi,” (“teacher,” “lord,” & “rabbi = Hebrew for “my master or teacher”) which are used by Matthew and Mark where there are parallels. *Epistata* has a military usage -- “one who came behind” = “one further back in the ranks”; and a governmental usage -- “one who is set over”. It was used in Athens of the “President” of the assembly (*ekklesia*).

**lower the nets:** It is not clear whether fishing in the “deep” was a normal way of fishing. The word used for nets (*diktua*) is a generic term for any kind of net. There are more specific terms for a round net that was thrown (*amphiblastron*) and for a large net that was dragged from a boat or from shore (*sagene*). Both terms are used elsewhere in the NT.



**5:8 Simon Peter:** The text itself marks this moment there in v.8 when, for the time, he is named “*Simon Peter*.” The classic scriptural marker for the point when God claims someone for his own and renames him or her. This renaming is mentioned again in Luke 6:14.

**Depart from me Lord:** He addresses him as “master” (Greek: *epistatēs*, a term used for tutors and teachers) at 5:5. But after the miraculous catch, he addresses him as “Lord” (*kyrios*) at 5:8.

**for I am a sinful man:** Many commentators have speculated about the similarity between the wondrous catch of fish reported here and the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in John 21:1-11. In Luke 4:8 Simon addresses Jesus as Lord, a post-resurrection title for Jesus (Luke 24:34; Acts 2:36) and recognizes himself as a sinner; an appropriate recognition for one who has denied knowing Jesus – Luke 22:54-62. Perhaps.

**5:11 They left everything:** in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22 the fishermen who follow Jesus leave their nets and their father; in Luke, they leave everything (see also Luke 5:28; 12:33; 14:33; 18:22), an indication of Luke's theme of complete detachment from material possessions.

**followed:** *akolouthein* is used in the Gospels for more than a physical act. The verb denotes the spiritual allegiance of the disciple (see 5:27-28; 9:23, 49, 57, 59, 61; 18:22,38,43; 23:39, 54). In Luke “following” will take on a special significance because of the importance of Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem.

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