**Luke 5:1-11**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-5/luke-51-11/>

Jesus begins to recruit His disciples. As Jesus walks along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He sees two sets of brothers who are fishermen: Simon and Andrew, and James and John. After He finishes His teaching, Jesus tells Simon to cast off from shore and let down his nets to fish. Simon obeys and they catch two boats full of fish. Simon recognizes that Jesus is the Christ and He tells him that from now on Simon will be catching men instead. After returning to shore, the four men leave everything and follow Jesus.

The parallel Gospel accounts for this event are Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; John 1:40-42.

Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat (v 1-3).

Luke zooms in from his broad remark about Jesus beginning His public ministry to a specific instance with the phrase Now it happened. Jesus was walking and teaching the crowd by the lake of Gennesaret (most likely in or around the town of Capernaum and/or the fishing village of Bethsaida).

In the Old Testament, when Galilee is spoken of (which is rarely) it is called “Chinnereth,” which is a Hebrew word that means “harp” since the sea is shaped like a harp (Numbers 34:11; Deuteronomy 3:17; Joshua 11:2, 12:3, 13:27, 19:35, 1 Kings 15:20). Sometimes the Greek New Testament calls it “Gennesaret,” as in this verse, which is the Greek form of “Chinnereth” (Matthew 14:34; Mark 6:53).

It is also called the “Sea of Tiberius” after the Caesar who reigned during Jesus’s adult life (John 6:1; 21:1). The town of Tiberius was established by Herod Antipas, and remains the name of the modern city on the western shore of the lake.

Today, the Sea of Galilee is roughly the same as it was in the New Testament era. It is thirteen miles in length from its north to its south. The Jordan River feeds and flows from it at each of these ends. The sea is a fresh water lake, and is about eight miles across at its widest point. It has 64 miles of surface area; its maximum depth is about 140 feet; and it has an average depth of 84 feet. In modern times, the eastern hills overlooking the Sea of Galilee are called the “Golan Heights.”

Apparently, the crowd was pressing around Him to such an extent that Jesus felt the need to remove Himself from them so that He could teach more effectively. This led Him to use a boat to create a platform from which to speak.

Luke continues that He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. One method used to wash fishing nets was to cast them into the water to clean them off. This is how Matthew and Mark’s Gospel accounts describe Jesus finding the brothers Simon (Peter) and Andrew (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16). From these parallel passages in Matthew and Mark we also learn that at least two of the fishermen Luke is referring to is Simon and his brother Andrew.

Because of the crowd pressing around Him, Jesus got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. This gave Jesus the space He needed to speak to the crowds without being inhibited and so that all could hear as His voice carried across the water. After Simon had moved the boat offshore, He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.

Simon, along with James and John, will become one of Jesus’s closest disciples over the course of His earthly ministry. Simon’s nickname is Peter, and it is by this moniker that he is most often spoken of. Peter is the Anglicized version of the Greek word for “rock” or “stone” which is “Petros.” Jesus’s nickname had not fully caught on at this time because Luke is using Simon’s given, Hebrew name instead of the name of Peter, the name by which Simon would be more widely known.

As Luke’s Gospel progresses the author will use the nickname of Peter more frequently (and Simon less frequently) in his general references about this disciple. Peter is also sometimes referred to as “Cephas,” which also means “stone” (John 1:42).

The Hebrew name Simon means “listen” or “hear.”

Simon’s nickname is an appropriate one. Rocks are hard. Peter was hard-headed. Sometimes for good, sometimes not. For example, just after confessing Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him for saying He is going to die (Matthew 16:16, 22).

Simon’s personality appears to be outgoing and impulsive—which leads to some spectacular failures on Peter’s behalf. But Peter also is used by God in inspiring ways (Acts 2:14-40). Despite his hard-headedness and his failures, Jesus loves Peter and will lead this fisherman from Galilee to do great things for His Kingdom. Peter’s fearlessness will be a strength worked to good purposes by God.

Less is known about Simon’s brother, Andrew. He is mentioned by name only a few times in Scripture. In John’s Gospel, we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptizer who, having heard John speak of Jesus, began following Him (John 1:35-40). From John’s account, Andrew then went to find his brother Simon saying, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41). When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated as Peter)” (John 1:42). Their previous encounter apparently took place outside of the district of Galilee (John 1:43), probably near the place where John the Baptist was camped. It most likely occurred shortly during His return to Galilee (Luke 4:14) after Jesus came out of the wilderness where He was fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13).

What are we to make of this account in John compared with Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s? It appears that Jesus met Simon and Andrew before coming to Capernaum. From Mark’s account we can also place the brothers James and John in the house when Jesus heals Simon’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29). According to Luke’s timeline this would mean that Jesus had met all four men before His teaching on the shores of the lake. There would already have been a familiarity and companionship between Jesus and the two sets of brothers before He reveals more of His true identity to them in the coming verses.

The different arrangements and ordering of these events among the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and Luke probably amount to Matthew and Mark narrating things in a thematic order and Luke narrating in a chronological “consecutive order” (Luke 1:1-3).

After He had finished speaking, Jesus then asked Simon to “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

But Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing” (v 4-5).

The experienced fisherman informs his passenger (Jesus) that it is not a time when fish can be caught and that they did not have any success the night before. They are likely tired, discouraged, and do not want to have to repeat the painstaking process of cleaning and storing their nets a second time.

This would have been extra-humbling with the crowds of onlookers watching from shore. After seemingly venting his frustration, Simon says “but I will do what You say and let down the nets.” He will obey the teacher who miraculously healed his mother-in-law from her fever (Luke 4:38-39).

When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink (v 6-7).

After gathering up their nets they make their way out into the deep water and begin to fish. To Simon’s astonishment, the nets become so full of fish that he must call for help to load them into the other boat before his nets break. The weight of the fish they caught was enough to fill both boats so that they both began to sink. Remarkable!

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken**;** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men” (v 8-10).

Luke describes that amazement had seized Simon and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken. Peter had already expressed that catching fish at this place and at this time was impossible. So they properly interpreted this event as a miracle.

It is at this point that Simon realizes a portion of the authority Jesus has and he bids Him to depart, “for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” After witnessing Jesus’s miracle of healing in his own home and now the miracle of the large catch, Simon Peter correctly equates that this teacher who has power over earthly creation must also have authority over sin.

At the same time, Simon also recognizes his own failures and inadequacies in light of who Jesus is. Simon sees his own unworthiness to be associated with the Lord because he is a sinful man. In seeing these things, Simon is remarkably humbled. Humility is seeing reality as it is. In his amazement, Simon sees the reality of Jesus and himself with great clarity.

Jesus assures Simon and tells him “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” Matthew and Mark’s Gospels also relate that Jesus told Andrew, and likely James and John, a similar message (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). Jesus is telling these fishermen that if they leave their nets and follow Him, they will be “catching the hearts and souls of men” rather than fish.

The Zebedee brothers, James and John, round out Jesus’s inner trio with Simon Peter. They appear to be close knit and boisterous. Their father’s name Zebedee means “Gift of God,” though Jesus later nicknames them “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). At one point the “Thunder Brothers,” to the irritation of their fellow disciples, get their mother Salome to ask Jesus to pick them to be the ones sitting at Jesus’s left and right when He inaugurates His kingdom. By asking to sit on His right and left, they are asking to be the next in charge (Matthew 20:20-24). James will be the first of the twelve disciples to be martyred, executed by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-2).

John was James’s younger brother. He was most likely the youngest of the disciples. He would become the author of the Gospel of John and three short epistles (1 John, 2 John, 3 John). As an old man exiled on the island of Patmos, John received apocalyptic visions and wrote the Book of Revelation.

When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him (v 11).

After returning to shore with both boats on the verge of sinking, Luke says they left everything and followed Him. This would mean that they left their business and previous affairs then and there to follow Jesus. Matthew more strongly forces this point using the adverb, “Immediately,” before saying they left their nets and followed Him (Matthew 4:20). Leaving their nets is a euphemism for “leaving everything” and it shows that they did not even take the time to unload (and sell) this large haul of fish. After witnessing the power and authority of Jesus, these four men were ready to follow Him and would become His first disciples.

**Biblical Text**

**1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people 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 and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!” 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.**