

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 5:1-11

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 5. Today, we will read verses 1-11.

In the previous chapter, we saw that Jesus had begun His earthly ministry, and it was already the second year of His work. He took Capernaum as the center of His ministry. Capernaum is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and many of Jesus' works were connected with the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee also has several different names. In the Old Testament, Numbers 34:11 records that it was called the Sea of Chinnereth. "Chinnereth" means harp, because the shape of the Sea of Galilee resembles a harp. Around the Sea of Galilee were many large cities, and often the sea was called by the name of the nearby city.

For example, in Luke 5:1, Jesus is said to be standing by the Lake of Gennesaret; the Lake of Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee. On the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee there was a city called Gennesaret. Therefore, when Scripture says "the Lake of Gennesaret," it tells us that the events took place in the waters of the Sea of Galilee near the city of Gennesaret.

Another example is found in John 21, where it mentions the Sea of Tiberias. The Sea of Tiberias is on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, where there was a city called Tiberias. It was there that Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?"—asking him three times. Therefore, whenever Scripture mentions a place name, it gives us concrete evidence of where these events actually took place.

Verse 1: "So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,"

Jesus had already begun His earthly ministry. Whenever He preached, He spoke with authority, and therefore people loved to listen to Him.

Verse 2: “And saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.”

This would have been in the morning. Fishermen usually went out at night, especially around 3 or 4 O’Clock in the morning, when it was easiest to catch fish. Typically, they would fish through the night, return to shore at daybreak, stop working, and then wash their nets.

Verse 3: “Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.”

Obviously, Simon Peter had fished all night. Early in the morning, when Jesus came to him, Peter was still by the boat. It seems that Jesus did not even ask for permission—He simply got into Peter’s boat and immediately asked him to push out a little from the shore. Then He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. Because the people were on the shore, it was easier to speak when the boat was slightly offshore, using the water as a natural amplifier.

We should remember that this was already the second year of Jesus’ earthly ministry. In the first year, when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He had actually already met Peter and changed his name from Simon to Peter, meaning “stone.” After a year had passed, John the Baptist was imprisoned, and Jesus began His public ministry. Now He asked Peter to move the boat out into the water and sat down to teach the multitudes.

Jesus’ action carried deep significance. Peter sat beside Him, and when Jesus preached, Peter must have heard Him most clearly. In fact, it seems that Jesus was preaching this message specifically to Peter. Yet it is very striking that Scripture does not record a single word of what Jesus taught. It is quite possible that Peter himself

had no heart to listen, even though Jesus had him sit right beside Him, as if the message were especially for him.

Verse 4: “When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’”

To let down the nets, the boat first had to go into deep water, for fish are found in deeper places.

Verse 5: “But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’”

Peter was an experienced fisherman. The Sea of Galilee was the place where he regularly fished. He knew the waters well, he knew where the schools of fish were, and he knew when fish could be caught. Yet this seasoned fisherman had worked all night and caught nothing. After dawn, in the morning, fish would be resting, and it was basically impossible to catch any. But for the sake of courtesy, and perhaps with some reluctance, he said, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

In Chinese, there is no distinction between singular and plural, so we cannot see the difference. But if you look at the English or the original Greek text, in verse 4 when Jesus said, “Let down your nets,” the word nets is plural. But in verse 5, when Peter said, “I will let down the net,” the word net is singular. Clearly, he had little confidence in what Jesus said. In order to comply, he reluctantly let down just one net, because according to his experience, it was impossible to catch any fish.

Verse 6: “And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.”

This was completely beyond Peter’s expectation. Jesus told him to let down multiple nets, but he let down only one. With that one net, he caught an overwhelming number of fish—so many that the net was almost breaking. Fortunately, they had partners nearby.

Verse 7: “So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.”

At the beginning, there were two boats there. Peter was in one boat, while the owner of the other boat may have gone to wash his nets. Later we see that this was likely the boat of James and John. They signaled their partners to come and help. They filled both boats with fish, so that the boats were nearly sinking. This was truly a miracle. Fish caught with a single net were enough to fill two boats, so full that they almost sank.

If you were Simon Peter—if you were that fisherman—you would surely be overjoyed: fishing all night and catching nothing, then at Jesus’ word going into deep water, letting down one net, and catching two boatloads of fish. But Peter’s reaction was very unusual.

Verse 8: “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’”

Let us carefully consider what Peter meant. The most immediate reaction may have been his unbelief. When Jesus told him to go into deep water and let down the nets, he did not believe fish would be caught. When Jesus told him to let down multiple nets, he let down only one. Because of his unbelief, he called himself a sinner. This is the first level of understanding.

If we go deeper, a year earlier, when Peter first encountered Jesus, his brother Andrew had brought him to Jesus and excitedly told him, “We have found the Messiah.” The first thing Jesus did when He saw Simon was to change his name to Peter. Peter had close fellowship with Jesus, and he even witnessed Jesus’ first miracle at Cana. Later, when Jesus began His public ministry, He personally healed Peter’s mother-in-law of her fever in Peter’s hometown of Capernaum.

After so many experiences, Peter knew clearly in his heart that this was God’s calling. Yet he could not let go; he could not follow fully, so he continued fishing. He remembered that just the night before, he had fished all night and caught nothing.

Yet with just one word from Jesus, two boats were filled with fish. All the riches of the earth belong to God—how could he be so lacking in faith?

We could also say that this was Peter's first personal experience of being deeply touched by Jesus. When a person encounters God, the first awareness is one's own filth and uncleanness, utterly incomparable with the holiness of the Son of God. Therefore, his response was, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Every follower of Jesus Christ must one day be brought to this point—to realize how unworthy we are. God's willingness to call us truly shows that He esteems us. We have nothing that allows us to stand before the Son of God. Peter's response here is precisely the response every person who truly touches the Lord should have.

Verses 9–10: "For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.'"

When we discover our own filth and uncleanness, realizing that we fall short of God's holiness and feel unqualified to follow the Lord, the first words the Lord speaks to us are, "Do not be afraid." God's calling never depends on what we can do. He gives us grace, and He gives us power to do what He calls us to do—beyond ourselves. Not only does He tell us not to fear, but He also gives this promise: "From now on you will catch men."

Verse 11: "So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him."

Yes, they had caught two boatloads of fish—but what were these fish compared to following Jesus? They forsook everything and followed Him. If we truly know that our Lord is the Lord of heaven and earth, then we know that everything on this earth already belongs to Him. With such understanding, our following becomes bold and free. But before that boldness, we must first see our own filth, uncleanness, and unworthiness—and recognize that it is God who truly lifts us up

and esteems us, granting us grace we do not deserve, so that we may catch men for Him.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Just as You called Peter and John, You are doing the same today, in our own lives, giving us a personal and subjective experience. Touch us deeply, and let us know You deeply—knowing that You are the Lord of heaven and earth, and knowing that our entire life should be placed in Your hands. Enable us to follow You. Bless my life today. In everything I encounter and every person I meet today, let me bear witness in grace that we are people who have Christ. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.