

Chris Murphy

June 11th, 2023

Scripture: Luke 5: 1-11

Sermon Title: Beginning the Journey with Jesus

Prayer...

Do you remember your early encounters with Jesus? As most of you know, I grew up in the church within a strong Christian family, so some of the first words spoken to me were words about Jesus and his love for me. I don't ever remember a time in my life when I did not know about Jesus. I remember accepting Jesus into my heart at the age of six and then becoming baptized and a member of La Jolla Presbyterian Church when I was thirteen. At fourteen, I found out I needed open heart surgery to correct a narrowing in my aorta. The surgery was successful and reminded me that God was with me in times of joy and scary moments when life felt fragile. My faith took off in a significant way when I was 15 thanks to Young Life student ministry and the youth ministry of La Jolla Presbyterian Church. By the age of 19, I was at Whitworth College and felt the call to ministry. I share briefly my story

as a reminder that everyone has a spiritual journey. Some of us are fortunate to grow up with faith. Others explore faith at a later time. All of our stories are sacred and it is important to regularly reflect on our spiritual journeys as a way to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

As we reflect on our own sacred stories; our own pilgrimages with Jesus, let me summarize the story we are reading today, which some call the conversion story of Simon Peter.

Story summary-

Jesus is teaching from one of the boats. Afterwards, he invites Simon, James, and John to fish on the other side of the boat. They put the nets on the other side of the boat even though they have natural doubts about whether they will catch any fish. They catch a bunch of fish.

Simon, says I am not worthy. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people. Simon, James, and John leave everything and follow Jesus.

What stands out to you in the story?

I like Simon's humility. He is humbled by the miracle of Jesus providing him, James, and John such a large amount of fish. He does not feel he deserves this kind of generosity. Simon is a simple fisherman. He feels unworthy of Jesus giving him such a gift.

Do you relate? Are there moment in your journey with Jesus, where God gave you a gift that you did not feel worthy to receive? Maybe is was a job opportunity or a special friendship. Maybe you received a financial gift that helped you through a hard time. Maybe you recovered from an illness. The beauty of Simon's response is that he is humble. He has humility in response to the miracle done by Jesus.

(Story of humility about someone)

The second part of this story that stands out to me is the importance of a miracle. My parents, my sister, her boys, and my wife and daughters got together recently at my parents home to celebrate my mom's birthday. During dinner, my dad and I sat next to my nephews and had a

conversation about Christian faith and belief in God. When asked about his own faith, my dad shared that part of the reason he believes in God and the life and teachings of Jesus is that miracles are real. My dad shared that he had seen miracles up close.

Can you imagine if people would have followed Jesus if he had not done miracles? Miracles were a big part of the ministry of Jesus. We are invited to ask God for miracles and to look for them as a sign of God's work in this world.

The third part of the story that stands out to me is Simon's invitation to fish for people.

Jesus knows the destiny of Simon. He knows Simon will become Peter. Peter means rock. Even though Simon has weaknesses, which we will see later when Simon Peter denies Jesus three times before the crucifixion of Christ, Jesus believes in him. Although Simon Peter has vulnerabilities, Jesus sees that he is a rock. He is to be a steady leader.

He is sacred to Jesus. Simon's natural rugged leadership as a fisherman will serve him well when he eventually fulfills his calling to fish for people.

In our own lives, Jesus also sees us as sacred. Jesus has given each of us a calling. There are things we are called to do that are unique for each of us. Recently, my friend Desiree Hartstock, who lives in our area and helps lead the Ignite Prayer group that is starting to meet at our church this summer, was sharing a word of encouragement on her Instagram site. In her video, she reminded us to pursue our dreams and to not neglect those dreams. She mentioned that we sometimes get scared about pursuing dreams, maybe because we are not sure they will work out, but that it is important to follow our hearts, to follow our dreams.

Deep down it was the calling of Simon to become Simon Peter, the rock that the early church would need to help grow the church. Jesus saw Simon's potential and he believed in him. To their credit, Simon, James, and John after seeing a miracle chose to follow Jesus.

Friends, we all have a choice to follow Jesus or to follow someone or something else. We could follow the path of success, money, fame. We could pursue our own interests without much thought to God's desires for us. Or, we can follow Jesus and pursue the God-given dreams that are on our hearts. By the way, you will know if you have a God given desire if your desire fits with your own gifts or potential gifts and with the needs of the world. God's dreams for us are also things we could not pursue on our own. They are things that require help from God. Many of the God given dreams we have will require miracles.

At our church, we are believing for miracles. Our mission is to fish for people and to offer them grace, hope, and love. We are fishing for people who feel lost or afraid or who do not know that they are chosen by God and given a purpose that is good and beautiful. Our job is to love those who feel unworthy like Simon or who feel abandoned or afraid. Fishing for people is as simple as reaching out to someone who is

lonely and in need of a friend. We all can share our stories of journeying with Jesus and then invite others to follow him.

Remember your pilgrimage with Jesus, your spiritual journey is a sacred one. Your life is sacred and Jesus sees your potential not only your pitfalls or mistakes. God is forgiving, gracious, and kind and believes in you. We are invited to follow him. For some of us, we have been on this pilgrimage with Jesus a long time. For others of us we might be just now setting out on the path. Life has moments where it is easy to stray from the path that God intends for us, but Jesus is always by our side guiding us gently and sometimes with a little persistence to get back to the sacred path of life and wholeness. We are here as a church community to worship and serve in partnership with one another, so that we can stay on the path that Christ wills for our lives.

As I mentioned last week and earlier in the announcement, Karen, Cate, Chiara, and I will be going on a pilgrimage/vacation to Ireland, Norway, and England over the next 18 days or so. We will miss you and we

appreciate that you will care for each other while we are out of town.

Thank you for journeying with us as a church and praying for us over the

next couple of weeks. We see you as our church family and we are so

grateful to be on this pilgrimage of life together. Let me now offer

prayer for each one of us...

AMEN

Luke 5:1-11

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

5 Once while Jesus[a] was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds 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, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when

Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.