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Preacher: James Day

- [0 : 0 0] taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.
- Simon answered, Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.
- When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.
- And they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord.
- I am a sinful man. For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. And so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.
- [1 : 0 7] Then Jesus said to Simon, Don't be afraid. From now on, you will catch men. So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.
- Amen. Well, if you have a Bible, do open it up again at Luke chapter 5. And we'll look at these verses together. Let me begin though by asking you a question.
- How do you like it when somebody tells you how to do your job? Has that ever happened to you? Perhaps some of you have been doing your job for quite a few years.
- And over that time, you've learnt your job really well. You know the job inside out. You've done it day in, day out. Throughout your adult life. But then, someone comes along.
- And they think they'll just offer you a bit of advice. Apparently, they've never done your job before. And they say to you, Ah, you don't want to do it like that.
- [2 : 1 1] You want to do it like this. I think you'd be better off doing it this way. I don't know what your job is. Maybe you're a teacher. And you have an Ofsted inspection. And the Ofsted inspector is at the back of the classroom.
- Watching you. Seeing how you teach. And then afterwards, as they do sometimes. They offer you a few tips and hints. On how you might improve your teaching. And then you discover that they've never actually taught before.
- You wouldn't feel too happy. Perhaps you do a job like a joiner. The church around. A pastor is about three or four joiners. As it happens. And you're a joiner. And someone comes along and notices the wood that you're using.
- To make a particular cabinet. Or to do a particular fitting. And they say, Oh, I don't think you want to use that sort of wood. You know, you've been doing the job for years. And they say, I don't think you want to do that. I think you want to use that soft wood.
- Instead of that hard wood that you're using. I think that would be more appropriate. Don't you? You can apply that to pretty much any job. Depending on your personality type.
- [3 : 0 8] You would probably do one of two things. You would perhaps just give quite a wry smile. I think, Oh, they'll learn. They'll learn. Or you might, if you have a more fiery disposition, think, I'm going to give them a piece of my mind.

How dare they tell me how to do my job. I know what I'm doing. They need to learn from me. Not the other way around. Well, in Luke chapter 5, we record that on one occasion, at Lake Gennesaret, Jesus was doing what he'd actually become known for.

And what people would have thought of probably as his job. What he'd been sent by God to do. He was preaching. And teaching the people. If you were to try and pick out what Jesus' job was at this point in his life, you would probably say, Oh, he was a preacher.

And that would be a very adequate description of what he did. And Luke tells us, in the first few verses of chapter 5, that there was a bit of a crush around Jesus at the lake's edge. Jesus has become well known at this point in the area.

He's become rather famous for preaching in a way that nobody else did. He preached with authority. And he's a bit crushed. So he decides to get into one of the two boats that seems to be at the lake's edge.

[4 : 21] And asks for it to be pushed out. It's Simon Peter's boat. Asks it to be put out from the shore, so that he could teach from the boat rather than at the lake's side. In many ways, it's a very good idea.

I don't know if you've noticed, but if you're in an area where there's particularly still water, calm water, sound travels really well over water. It kind of bounces off the surface. And it naturally amplifies it so that all the people would have heard him very well and very clearly.

And as you read through the chapter, you might think that the next thing that Luke is going to tell us then is the contents of Jesus' sermon. What did he tell them? What did he teach them?

I'm sure it was a fantastic sermon that he preached that day. I'm sure that every sermon that Jesus ever preached was a fantastic sermon. Nobody ever taught with the authority that he taught with.

But that isn't what Luke tells us, is it? That's not what we get next. What Luke tells us is that what happens next is that Jesus tells somebody else how to do his job.

[5 : 28] Jesus tells someone how to do his job. A job that Jesus had apparently never done himself. He'd been a carpenter for a while, for quite a few years apparently, and then he'd been a preacher for a while.

But no record of him ever being a fisherman. But he finishes his sermon. He turns to Simon Peter, who remember he's an experienced and presumably good fisherman.

He makes a living out of it. And he tells him how to fish. Just think about that for a moment and how Peter might have felt as this man did this to him.

A man who you'd describe as a carpenter turned preacher turns to an experienced fisherman and says, I think you ought to do it like this. How would you react if that were you in your job?

If someone tells you how to do it, and what's more the way they're telling you how to do it, it runs completely against the way that you know it ought to be done. You see, the middle of the day was not the time to go fishing on Lake Galilee.

[6 : 42] You can see from verse 5 and Simon Peter's answer that the best time to go fishing was night time. During the day, in that area of the world, the temperatures would be very warm, very hot.

And the fish wouldn't stay at the surface of the lake in such temperatures. They'd head down to the depths where it was cooler. And of course, that would put them out of the reach of the fishing nets. No point going fishing during the middle of the day.

At night was the time when they came to the surface. And at night then was the time to catch them or early morning. So that's when the fishermen, like Peter, would go out and work.

They would hang their nets out during the day time. They would put them out to dry so they wouldn't rot. Night time was the time to take the nets down and actually head out on their boats and fish. And Simon's response, doesn't it, in chapter 5, it reflects all of that.

He really respects Jesus. He refers to him as Master there in verse 5. But there's a strong note of exasperation, isn't there? Exasperation, he says, Master, Master, we've toiled all night.

[7 : 57] We've been going at this all night. and we've not caught a thing. This is the guy who's the expert, remember, when it comes to catching fish and you can sense what he's thinking.

He's like, come on Jesus. You might mean well here but there just aren't any fish to catch at the moment. If there were any there we'd have caught them last night when they were at the surface but there's no chance that we're going to find any fish now, Jesus.

It just is not going to happen. But his respect for Jesus does come through in what he says next. In verse 5 he says, but because you say so I will let down the nets.

Because you say so. That's quite an impressive response really. From a tired and exasperated fisherman he says, okay, because it's you.

He's obviously got to know Jesus a little bit because it's you. I'll do it. And what happens next shows that even despite his skepticism Peter was right to do what Jesus asked.

[9 : 10] No matter how much he might have doubted what would happen next. Verse 6 tells us, doesn't it, verse 6, when they had done so, when they'd let down the nets they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

Sometimes you get understatement in the Gospels. I think a large number of fish is a bit of an understatement. There were so many, there was a huge number of fish, so many that the nets begin to break.

The weight of the fish, the nets just won't hold it anymore. They were in the point of just giving way. The fishermen go into survival mode, don't they, and start calling urgently, sing the time partners, quick, quick, over here, quick, we're going to sink, bring your boat, we're going to sink, there's too many.

You can imagine the frantic waving and shouting that's going on. They're saying, come on, help us, or we're going to sink, we're going to drown. Even with the extra boat, we're told they're still in danger of sinking.

But it's then in verse 8 that the reason for Jesus the preacher telling Simon the fisherman how to do his job, it becomes apparent.

[10 : 20] You see, it wasn't so that Jesus could just make up for a bad night's fishing that Peter had had. He wasn't trying to help him out after a bad night's fishing.

It wasn't even that he was saying, I can teach you how to do your job better. That's not what Jesus was doing. What Jesus was doing was, he was bringing Peter to the point of recognising something.

Well, two things actually. He was bringing Peter to the point of recognising firstly, who he, Peter, was and secondly, who Jesus was.

Every now and again the Bible records for us the response of people who find themselves with the awesome and frightening privilege of finding themselves in the presence of God.

their response is recorded. We read from one of the best examples of that earlier on in the service in Isaiah 6.

[11 : 27] Now the prophet Isaiah there is in the temple in Jerusalem and as he's in the temple he sees a vision of God, he sees the king and what is his response when he's met with this overwhelming sight?

Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the king the lord of hosts.

Isaiah's reaction back there in the Old Testament to finding himself in the presence of God is to recognise the purity the holiness the awesomeness of God and his own utter sinfulness his own utter unworthiness by comparison.

For Isaiah being in the presence of the awesome God highlights in the most humbling of ways his own sinfulness his own uncleanness before God.

That's what happens here to Peter. Initially it would seem that this catcher fish sends Peter into autopilot.

[12 : 51] He and the others deal with the task of safely getting this monstrous catcher fish to shore. They do everything they can to frantically stop the boat sinking. But for Peter something else dawns very quickly.

he falls down at Jesus' knees in verse 8 and he says go away from me Lord I am a sinful man go away from me Lord I am a sinful man do you see what has happened to Peter?

very quickly he realises that the catcher fish it is not an ordinary catch it's a miraculous catch remember this man is a professional fisherman he should know he has seen countless catches of fish in his life this one is way out of the ordinary and that realisation it rapidly brings him to another realisation the man in the boat with him Jesus he cannot just be an ordinary man he cannot be he must be something considerably more for this to have happened now I don't know for certain whether at this point Peter fully recognised and fully understood the deity of Jesus that is Jesus Godhead

I don't know whether he fully got it at this point as you go on in the gospel it's clear that the disciples don't always understand who Jesus is but I'm pretty sure even at this early point Peter is connecting Jesus with God in some way he has definitely begun to understand and it's significant isn't it that as you go on in chapter 9 when you reach chapter 9 of Luke's gospel Jesus asks the disciples a question directly and he's just asked them before he asks this next question he asks who do people say I am you know people have seen me and what I do and what I say who are they saying I am and they say to well some say you're a prophet some say Elijah and so on and then Jesus said okay well who do you say that I am who do you say that I am it's Peter it's Peter who speaks up it's Peter who answers and it's

Peter who says you're the Christ of God you're the Christ of God it's Peter who is the first to recognize Jesus deity his identity who he is he's the first to figure it out it seems that Peter first came to that conclusion here on his fishing boat in chapter five his reaction his words they give away what Peter thought he says there in verse eight doesn't he go away from me Lord I am a sinful man now in that sentence there's a recognition of who Jesus Christ really is a recognition of who he is in verse five earlier on when Jesus had asked him to put out his nets for a catch Peter refers to Jesus as master master was a term of respect great respect shown to any person actually who carried authority the things that Jesus had already said and done before this it led

[16 : 43] Peter to recognise that yes Jesus was someone to be respected he was a person of authority but in verse eight Peter refers to Jesus as Lord Lord now that title is a step up from master normally in the bible the term Lord has undertones of deity of godhood it's how you refer to God Lord what's more in the presence of Jesus Peter falls to his knees and recognises who he Peter is he describes himself as a sinful man I'm a sinful man that's not just Peter admitting that he's a man who has done a few wrong things in his life it's not Peter admitting that I'm a man who has committed sins but he's saying I am sinful that is what defines me that is what I am a sinful man we live in a society that encourages us to think that at our core at the core of every human being is ultimately someone who is good a good person and when we do something wrong it goes against what our hearts are really like because our hearts are really good at core we're good people now that kind of view it might actually hold up pretty well if you're to compare yourself to the people around you especially the worst of them you might come to the conclusion yeah I'm pretty good compared to the worst of people but if you find yourself in the presence of the absolutely pure and absolutely holy

God just like Isaiah there in the Old Testament just like Peter here on his fishing boat you're going to come to a very different conclusion in God's presence no one is going to come out saying well I look pretty good don't I I'm a good person not next to God not next to Jesus Christ quite the opposite I'm quite keen on keeping fit I'm quite keen on going running and every now and again I'll go for a jog when I came here a couple of years ago and spent a month here I used to go running on the west cliff and try and run up and down the hills on the west cliff there I quite enjoy it sometimes not so much going uphill but on the flat I quite enjoy it and I'd like to think I'm reasonably okay at it well one of my colleagues in my previous job discovered that I like to go out for a run every now and again and they invited me to take part in a series of fell running races

I don't know if you're familiar with fell running it's quite popular in the Lake District and they organised these fell runs and I said would you like to enter I'll be entirely honest no I did not want to enter I didn't I had some idea of what it would be like I knew that it would involve a lot of pain and it wouldn't be a lot of fun and thankfully these races were on Thursday nights and I had another commitment on Thursday nights and I couldn't do it I used to help out with a youth club but they kept pestering me to enter and eventually came and asked me so have you got that youth club on this week they knew it was half term and I said no and I said right well you can enter the race so I entered it now again I'll be honest I didn't think I was going to win I knew I wouldn't win but I thought I was reasonably fit so in a race with about I reckon about 50 people in it I thought

I'd finish somewhere in the middle of the pack I was in for a shock I beat only two people in the race both of them were in their 60s and one of them got lost and that's absolutely true you see put me beside the people who are actually good at running who were good at it and my true ability became very clear very clear I'm not a good runner I'm a reasonably fit individual I'm not a good runner well we must times that effect by a million and more when it comes to placing our supposed goodness next to that of God we might think you might think that you're alright compared with everybody else but have you compared yourself to God have you come to view your heart not in comparison to the people around you but in comparison with

God you'll know if you've done that you'll know because you'll have realised and you'll be fully aware of just how sinful you are in God's sight Isaiah again in the Old Testament tells us that in God's sight all our supposed righteousness all our supposed goodness in other words it's like filthy rags now I'll be honest it's not necessarily a pleasant thing to realise the sinfulness of your heart before God it's not now the Bible Christians often refer to it as conviction of sin and it's the frankly very uncomfortable realisation of what our hearts are really like how we appear before God it's what happens to Peter here he's convicted of his sinfulness when he's placed next to Jesus and with

[23 : 16] Peter it seems that it was all too much for him it was too much and he says go away from me depart from me leave me Jesus I cannot be in your presence I cannot there is genuine fear in what Peter says here fear and Peter had good reason for being afraid he had good reason for saying depart from me leave me he knew his Old Testament he knew his Bible he knew that sinful people cannot enter the presence of God he knew that anything sinful couldn't survive in the presence of God it would be destroyed his response was entirely in keeping with all of that he knew he wasn't worthy of being in Jesus' presence and yet look at how Jesus responds look at what Jesus says to this terrified man in front of him in response to his request to go away leave me and at verse 10 what does

Jesus say to Peter he says do not be afraid do not be afraid Jesus recognises Peter's fear his fear of the consequences of being a sinful man in the presence of God and he says don't be afraid don't be afraid now Peter will not find himself destroyed for being a sinner in God's presence Jesus' words here show that he's gracious and that he's merciful he's not going to treat Peter in the way that he deserves to be treated rather he's going to do something else very different with him he tells Peter don't be afraid from now on you will be catching men it won't be fish anymore

Peter that you'll catch it will be people and he won't be catching people from a lake in order to put them on a dinner plate rather he'll be catching them from out of the kingdom of this world characterised by sin under the sway of the devil and he'll be bringing them into the kingdom of God he will do it by preaching to Christ and why he came the salvation from sin that he's brought through his death on the cross in verse 11 we read don't we what Peter and the other fishermen with him did they left their boats behind and they followed Jesus Peter goes from saying Jesus depart from me go away from me leave me to following him to being with him for the rest of his life for eternity actually it's more than just following him as well it's serving him by spreading the news about him telling others about Jesus so that they would serve and follow him too it's quite a change around from what

Peter was expecting so so I need to ask you have you gone through the experience that Peter went through here have you experienced the same thing I don't mean have you had the experience of Jesus coming into your workplace and doing something miraculous I mean have you had Jesus reveal who he is to you so that you recognize who you are a sinner in his presence but then heard Jesus say don't be afraid follow me come with me have you cried out and acknowledged before God that yes Jesus I'm a sinful person have you seen that that's fundamentally what you are you see in God's sight that's what we all are sinners have you confessed that not just to your friends not just to your family members not just to someone in a church not just to yourself even but to

God to Jesus Christ now if you have done all of that if you've come to that realisation if you've confessed your utter unworthiness before Jesus then be assured of this Jesus response is not to banish you from his presence it's not to send you away that's what Peter expected Peter expects Jesus to say Peter you and I you and I we can have nothing whatsoever to do with each other you're a sinner I'm God the son we cannot be together never the two shall meet leave but that is not Jesus response not at all his response to the person who confesses their sinfulness their complete unworthiness before them is to say don't be afraid don't worry you and I actually will get on fine in fact come and live alongside me follow me and I'll teach you to help me with what

[28 : 44] I do I'll teach you to do my job I'll teach you to help people come to the same realisation that you've come to about who they are and who I am so that they will trust me and follow me too isn't that incredible that you would do that with any of us penalty for it himself when he dies on the cross.

He deals with it by living a perfect life on our behalf, fulfilling God's law perfectly for us so that his perfect life is counted ours when we trust on him.

He declares us forgiven as the one who has the authority to do that because he's God. So every sin you've ever committed was against him, he can declare you forgiven.

And then having dealt with that barrier of sinfulness that would forever keep us out of the presence of God he says, now spend all of your time with me. Follow me. I'll teach you to introduce others to me so that they would know me too.

Now let me just try and apply this to your situation. If you're not someone who's come to know Jesus Christ for yourself can I ask you stop comparing yourself to the people around you.

[30 : 44] It won't achieve anything. If that's what you're doing it will achieve nothing. You have to compare yourself to God because that's the only standard that actually counts and that actually matters.

If you've done that if you've compared yourself to God and you've realised just how far short you fall seek his forgiveness because he will freely give it in Jesus Christ.

Now if you're someone who's done all of the above who has put your trust in Jesus as the one who deals with your sinfulness then follow him. You now have the immense privilege if you're a believer you have the immense privilege of spending all of your days with Jesus Christ.

Do you make the most of your privileges? You have a Lord and Saviour who doesn't say to you leave me, depart from me but be with me. Learn from me.

Now Peter did that. He left everything and he followed Jesus and he learnt from his new Lord and Master.

[32 : 02] Peter went on to tell others of who Jesus was and why he came. About three years after this incident he preaches his first sermon and 3,000 people are converted. Now we're not all going to be people who see that sort of result from our following Jesus are we?

But we are all to be spending our lives with him. Getting to know him through the pages of our Bibles through prayer through teaching one another and sharing fellowship with one another so that we would grow in maturity.

Learning to use whatever gifts you have and you will have gifts whoever you are that are useful in God's kingdom that can be used to introduce others to Jesus Christ. Is that how as a Christian you see your walk with Jesus?

Do you have a desire to introduce others to him? It's not just for the keen Christians that. It's not just for the keen ones.

It's at the core of what being a Christian is a follower of Christ who learns from him. If as a Christian you don't want to be learning how to catch men and women and boys and girls for the kingdom of God.

[33 : 14] Something is terribly wrong. And you need to re-examine your walk with him. Jesus brings us to himself. He deals with our sin so that we can join him in that great task of bringing others to himself.

So think about how you can do that. It won't necessarily be like a Peter standing in front of thousands of people and preaching. Of course not. But there will be ways in which if you belong to this church here you can help with that.

If you're a visitor and you belong to a church elsewhere that you can help with your church in introducing others to Christ. Do be involved in that. That's why he's called you to himself.

So that you can learn from him and walk with him. Amen. Lord Jesus Christ we thank you that as sinful men and women we can still come to you and we can seek your forgiveness and we can seek your cleansing and you will not send us away.

You do not send us away but rather you forgive us. You do cleanse us and you do allow us to enter into your presence. so that we can spend our lives with you.

[34 : 35] Serving you. Making you known. With the hope of one day spending an eternity with you. In that new heavens and that new earth. So Lord we pray then help us to realise who we are realise who you are but trust in you and then follow you all of our days.

And we ask it for your glory. Amen.