

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Casting Your Nets

Lesson: Luke 5:1-11

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who 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 from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 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."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled 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.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

There is something called Murphy's Law. Some days, it feels like Murphy's Law is in full effect. Let me give you an example. Imagine you are spreading jam on toast for breakfast. Then, by accident, you drop the toast. If the unbuttered side lands on the floor, you can apply the "three-second rule" and safely eat it. However, you know life isn't that easy. When you look down, hoping that the jam side didn't land on the floor, what do you always see? That's right. The jam-covered side is always facing down.

Or suppose you're running late for an appointment. You rush to get there, but at that exact moment, the road is congested with traffic and construction. Sound familiar? Or think about when you go to Walmart and struggle to find a parking spot close to the entrance. After circling around, you finally park at the farthest spot and walk toward the store—only to see someone pulling out of a prime parking spot near the entrance.

A couple of days ago, I was almost done writing this sermon and was about to save it on my computer. But suddenly, my computer slowed down, then started showing errors, and eventually stopped responding. The only message I could see on my screen was “Not Responding”. I waited for ten minutes, but nothing changed. Finally, I had to restart my computer, and when it rebooted, only part of my sermon remained. I had to rewrite the rest. This sermon is what I rewrote. That moment was truly frustrating.

When we face situations like these, we often say, “That’s Murphy’s Law.”

In today’s Scripture, we see people who seem to be experiencing Murphy’s Law. They are none other than Peter and the fishermen working with him.

The Lake of Gennesaret was hot and dry during the day and cool at night. Because of this, fish would stay in the deeper waters during the day to escape the heat and come up to the shallower areas at night to feed. Fishermen of that time knew this pattern well. That’s why they would go out to fish in the evening, work through the night, return at dawn, sell their catch at the market, wash their nets, and rest during the day.

At that time, it was common for children to take on their parents’ professions. Since Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen, it is likely that their father was also a fisherman. Peter must have helped his father from a young age, gaining extensive knowledge about the Lake of Gennesaret. He would have known exactly where to catch the most fish.

But that night, it was as if Murphy’s Law had taken hold of Peter—nothing was going right. No matter what he did, he couldn’t catch a single fish. As the head of his household, Peter refused to give up. He kept moving to different spots, casting his nets again and again, trying every bit of knowledge and experience he had accumulated over the years. Despite feeling uneasy, he suppressed his anxiety and kept working as hard as he could.

However, no matter how hard he tried, Peter couldn’t catch a single fish that night.

Finally, the sun rose. He had worked tirelessly all night, and he was exhausted. But more than his physical fatigue, what weighed on him was the fact that he had nothing to bring home to his family. As the provider, he felt like he had failed them. He blamed himself, felt discouraged, and returned to shore empty-handed.

Given his impulsive nature, he might have wanted to throw his nets down in frustration. But knowing he had to go out fishing again that evening, he quietly sat at the shore, washing his nets.

Jesus was watching him. Then, Jesus stepped into Peter's boat, sat down, and began teaching the crowd. After teaching, Jesus turned to Peter and said:

“Go out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

How do you think Peter felt at that moment?

Peter was a seasoned fisherman. He had used all his knowledge, experience, and skills to fish at the best time and place. Yet, he had caught nothing.

Many people were following Jesus, and Jesus had performed miracles—including healing Peter's mother-in-law. But as a fisherman, Peter may have thought to himself, “I know this lake better than Jesus, who is just a carpenter.”

So he responded: “Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing.”

We don't know exactly what Peter was thinking, but then he added:

“But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Peter did not fully understand Jesus' command because he had already cast his nets countless times that night and caught nothing. Even though he agreed to obey, he probably had doubts and low expectations. According to his experience, this was neither the right place nor the right time to catch fish.

Still, with a mixture of doubt and obedience, Peter went back out to the deep waters and let down his net.

And what happened?

As he tried to pull the net back up, it was so full of fish that he couldn't lift it alone. He had to call his partners in the other boat for help, and together they filled both boats to the point of almost sinking.

Murphy's Law does not apply in the presence of Jesus.

Peter had experienced Jesus' power when He healed his mother-in-law. Now, he experienced an even greater miracle—one that shook him to his core. He realized that this was not just about a miraculous catch of fish.

Through these experiences, Peter saw who Jesus truly was. He understood that Jesus is the One who turns sorrow into joy, despair into hope, and meaningless toil into a purposeful life.

At that moment, Peter knew that everything in life depends on Jesus Christ.

So when Jesus called him to follow Him as a disciple, Peter left everything behind and followed Jesus.

There are times when we are just like Peter, toiling all night with empty nets. We trust in our own abilities, experiences, and expertise rather than in God's Word.

But life—our birth, our death, and everything in between—is ultimately in God's hands.

And when things don't go as planned, when life takes unexpected turns, we often feel discouraged, anxious, and lost.

In those moments, what we need is to trust in God's Word and be willing to cast our nets again. Even when God's command doesn't align with our experiences or logic, we must choose to obey and follow His Word.

This coming Tuesday and Wednesday, I will be at Pine Lake for my ordination interview, which I have been preparing for nearly three years. The pressure is so overwhelming. And now, it's only two days away, and I am already feeling anxious, nervous, and extremely stressed. I feel like I should read more, prepare more, and organize my thoughts better. But because my mind is so restless, preparing feels difficult, and I can't help but worry.

I tend to imagine worst-case scenarios, and my mind races ahead with concerns.

In this situation, Peter's story brings me great comfort.

Of course, I must prepare as best as I can. But passing or failing this interview is not just about my abilities, experiences, or knowledge. Even if the results don't go the way I hope, I must trust that God is with me in this process.

And so, I must choose not to be discouraged but to trust in God's Word and cast my net in obedience.

We all face struggles in life. Sometimes, things don't go as planned, and unexpected difficulties leave us feeling discouraged.

But when we are weary, when we feel like giving up, God calls us. He tells us to go out into the deep and cast our nets.

So let us trust in His strength, surrender our lives to Him, and follow His will.

Let us never lose hope and, in obedience, cast our nets into the deep. Amen.