

St. Luke 5:1-11

Dear Friends in Christ,

Several weeks ago I picked up a copy of a notice that was sent home to the parents of high school students. The incident took place probably 20 years ago. You might remember it. The name of the school was not mentioned. The notice read: "Our school's cross-graded, multi-ethnic, individualized learning program is designed to enhance the concept of an open-ended learning program on the continuum of multi-ethnic, academically enriched learning, using the identified intellectually-gifted child as an agent of his own learning." One parent responded with a note that read, "I have a college degree (which may or may not mean anything, however...), (I) speak two foreign languages and four Indian dialects...but I haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about."

Reading the notice reminded me of how nonsensical and exasperating aspects of life have become, and more so now than when I first read it - years ago! It is the Lord Jesus who pierces through the doublespeak of this world, clears the air and points us in the right direction.

This morning we're receiving . . .

HEAVENLY CLEAR WORDS AT GENNESARET

I. Something Worth Listening To.

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. (vv. 1-3)

It's quite a scene, don't you think? God in the flesh standing by the lake of Gennesaret - by water He created filled with life He created, standing with humans He created, then gets into a boat which was designed and built by minds and hands He gifted to design and build it. He's doing what He entered His creation to do: A face to face meeting with what He created in His image. Humans!

Again, we're told that "while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God...Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land." And He did this in order to move away from the press of the crowd and clearly speak to this world of **doublespeak**; this world twisted with trouble and tears: "And he sat down and taught the people from the boat." (v. 3b) Finally, something worth hearing.

Martin Luther once said:

Men who are accursed say that first the internal word must be present (that is, what I call the internal fuzzies of the heart; you know, those old "felt needs"). But God does not reveal Himself in the heart except through the external Word (for us, Scripture; for the people at Gennesaret, the very presence of the Word made flesh). That is why the external Word must be the beginning of your consideration and enlightenment. (*What Luther Says*, CPH, p. 1466)

Wouldn't it be amazing if we could devote just 50% of our phone distractions to the hearing and study of the Word of God? Oh, if God would only text! Oh! He did! Are we reading it? Studying it? Well, listen to this part of the text . . .

II. Jesus Is God. We are Sinful!

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. (vv. 4-10a)

Peter saw it and witnessed to it: the power of the miracle testified to the fact that the non-professional fisherman in the boat with them is the One Who created all the fish in the first place. God! He is the One who created these fishermen and gave them the ability to catch the fish!

Recall that moment when Jesus confronted the unbelieving Jews who were ready to stone Him to death. They said to Jesus, “...we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” (Jn. 10:33) Jesus then said to them: “‘If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works (that is, the miracles), that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.’” (Jn. 10:37-38)

This is truly astounding. Simon Peter - a hardworking, professional fisherman seen mostly as a very ordinary, every day person - basically understood and grasped what the elitists of his day could not and would not grasp! Jesus is God. Nothing has changed!

And Peter clears the air for all the self-absorbed and self-deluded: “‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’” Being confronted by the holiness and power of Jesus to love and forgive can only lead us to the same confession: “‘I am a sinful person! I am!’”

I have always enjoyed reading observations Sir Winston Churchill made about humanity. The following is attributed to him:

Certain it is that, while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress - starvation, terror, war-like passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy - the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up! (Source unknown)

What Churchill stated is a breath way from defining mans’ sinful nature - original sin. Again, he said “(Man’s) virtues and...wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled.” A glance around this world and our country would underscore that! No notable improvement! Mostly deterioration...decline!!

The words we hear this morning from Gennesaret lead us to this truth: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23) For all our desire to make everything *okay* in and with this world it isn’t and won’t be. Churchill’s observation is only partially correct: “Under sufficient stress...the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds...!” The fact is, man does “the most terrible deeds” even in the absence of “sufficient stress” because the “sufficient stress” of human sin is ever present in every human being. Peter confessed it. I confess it for myself. I

would guess that you do the same.

But, look, comfort and help are also “sufficiently” present . . .

III. Do Not Be Afraid.

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. (vv. 10b-11)

What comfort! Such Heavenly clear words to an undeserving, sinful human who cries out the reality of that sin. Jesus forgives Peter immediately: “‘Do not be afraid.’” Christ doesn’t give Peter a bad time of it (as we might give to others who step on our toes). On the contrary, Jesus immediately comforts those who see and confess their sin. It’s the same comfort He gives us in the words of absolution, in our baptisms and in His Holy Supper. It is as the Apostle John wrote: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn. 1:8-9) The words spoken at Gennesaret could not be clearer. After all, He is the Lamb of God who has taken away our sin!

C. F. W. Walther wrote:

A Christian is not reckless, wild, and vulgar, but his conscience is timid, low-spirited, and despondent. He feels the gnawing of his sin and trembles at the wrath of God, the power of the devil, and the thought of death. A heart bruised and crushed like this relishes the Lord Christ greatly. (Dr. C. F. W. Walther, “The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel”, p. 120)

And do we. As recipients of Christ’s love and every assurance that every sin has been pardoned, He makes something out of us: “‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’” (v. 11) Heavenly clear words for our ears and hearts at the lake of Gennesaret. **Do not be afraid.**

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

February 10, 2019

St. Luke 5:1-11: ***“Heavenly Clear Words at Gennesaret”***

I. Something Worth Listening To.

II. Jesus Is God. We Are Sinful.

III. Do Not Be Afraid.

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