

Luke 5:1-11 in the context of Luke 4:30-5:11

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

4³¹ Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and *on the Sabbath* he taught the people. ³² They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

³³ In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴ “Go away! What do you want with us, **Jesus of Nazareth**? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the **Holy One of God!**”

³⁵ “Be quiet!” Jesus **SAID STERNLY**. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

³⁶ All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!” ³⁷ And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and **REBUKED** the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰ *At sunset*, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and **LAYING HIS HANDS ON EACH ONE**, he healed them. ⁴¹ Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “**You are the Son of God!**” But he **REBUKED** them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the **Messiah**.

⁴² At daybreak, Jesus went out to a *solitary* place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” ⁴⁴ And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

5¹ 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

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. The Greek language is more complex, and Hebraic notions, Jewish practices are explained (whereas in Matthew they are not). In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

on the Sabbath (4:31) & At sunset (4:40) :: These first scenes take place on the Sabbath, the day of rest in which work was forbidden so as to prioritize the worship of God. Healing was considered to be “work.” So we see here both that Jesus disobeys the law to heal for the greater good, and that the people of the village respect the law, coming to the house only at sunset, after the Sabbath was over. It goes from sundown Friday to sundown on Saturday. The theme of how to observe the law and the way in which it leads to faithfulness to God is wrestled with in Luke 4 & 5.

Jesus of Nazareth | Messianic titles::

Throughout these chapters Jesus is identified with different names, each carrying significant theological weight and cultural meaning. It’s always others that recognize and name the true identity of Jesus.

REBUKED:: Curiously Luke employs the same Greek word “to rebuke” or “to speak sternly” when he describes Jesus both exorcising a demon in 4:35 and 4:41 as well as when he heals, or “exorcises,” the Peter’s mother-in-law of her fever inducing sickness.

solitary place :: ἐρημος [erémos] as an adjective the word means: uncultivated, unpopulated place; a desolate (deserted) area; (figuratively) a barren, solitary place that also provides needed quiet (freedom from disturbance). As a noun this is the same place to which the prophets went to listen for the word of God, in which the Israelites wandered on the way to the Promised Land and where Jesus was tempted by the devil in Luke 4:1-13. Jesus consecrates and centers himself, in the line of the spiritual disciplines of the prophets who came before him.

They were amazed at his teaching :: throughout these chapters we see Luke emphasize the growing adulation of Jesus and spreading acknowledgment of his moral authority and religious teaching.

Lake of Gennesaret :: Only Luke calls the “Sea of Galilee” by this name.

sat down :: As in Luke 4:20 we see this cultural custom to sit down when teaching, an opposite way to draw or focus attention as that of our cultural practice.

Go away from me, Lord :: Peter's response is metaphorical more than literal. As with many stories in the Hebrew Scriptures, the nearer one comes to the presence and purpose of God the more one becomes aware of one's own sinfulness and unworthiness. See the stories of Abraham (Genesis 18:27); Job (Job 42:6) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5). Peter also uses the word "Lord" [kurios] in Greek, which was the Greek version of the Hebrew title [Adonai] traditionally used in the place of the un-sayable Divine Name [Yahweh]. Peter's confession of sin is also a confession of faith.

we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything :: Curiously Jesus seems to call fishermen that are seemingly failures. Their boat is empty, and as such it (and they) are now able and available to be involved in God's unexpected and unimaginably illogical work.

fish for people :: The text uses a playful word play to introduce the subversive notion of vocation, of Jesus calling these fishermen to a new way of being.

LEPROSY ... AND TOUCHED HIM :: In the Hebrew culture and scriptures leprosy described both the disease and a handful of skin conditions. According to the law as told in Leviticus 13:1-46 it was up to the priest to diagnose and proscribe action for such diseases. Leprosy made one ritually unclean, those unworthy and unable to live within the boundaries of human community and public worship for fear of "transmitting" such unrighteousness. By healing through a physical touch Jesus resists and rejects this isolating connotation, and thereby takes the ritual uncleanness of the sick upon himself. ⁴¹ *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron,* ² *"When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a DEFILING SKIN DISEASE, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. ³ The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean. ... ⁴⁵ Anyone with such A DEFILING DISEASE must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'* ⁴⁶ *As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp."* Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46

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.

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.

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with LEPROSY. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "*Lord*, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and TOUCHED THE MAN. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and OFFER THE SACRIFICES THAT MOSES COMMANDED for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

***What strikes you in this passage? How does it interact with your life?**

***This is one of the foundational stories of vocation, relating how Jesus calls us to live, for and by him. Often we struggle in life to see how Jesus uses us. It – and we – can seem like a failure or a non-event. Yet here Jesus starts not with successful fishermen, but rather with empty boats. How are apparent failures & success expectations that handicap you in your life of faith and relational trust of God?**

***Peter simultaneously recognizes the righteousness of Jesus and his own sinfulness. How have you experienced that in your life? Does it lead you to action or inaction? Confidence or self-doubt? Why?**