

**Luke 5:1-11 (Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany—Series C)**  
**“Called By Christ”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**  
**February 6, 2022**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel reading recorded in Luke 5:

<sup>1</sup>And it happened, while the crowd was pressing upon Him to hear the word of God and He was standing beside the lake Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup>He saw two boats beside the lake. But the fishermen from them had gotten out and were washing the nets. <sup>3</sup>And after entering one of the boats, which was Simon’s, He asked to push off a bit from shore. And He sat and began to teach the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>Now when He stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Push off into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup>And Simon answered and said, “Master, we toiled through the whole night and have taken nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets.” <sup>6</sup>And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. <sup>7</sup>And they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>Now when Simon Peter saw this, he fell to Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” <sup>9</sup>For amazement had seized him and all those with him at the catch of fish which they had taken. <sup>10</sup>And likewise also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch people.” <sup>11</sup>And when they had brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Him.

Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim, each having six wings. One called to the other and said, “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory!” The foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

You can imagine how Isaiah felt. He felt as if he would die! He felt unclean, and that the people with whom he lived were unclean. Isaiah as a sinful man in the presence of the thrice holy God thought that He would surely die.

Then one of the seraphim, a very special order of angels, took tongs and went up to the altar in the temple and took a piece of burning coal from the altar. He touched Isaiah’s lips with it and said to him, “Your lips are clean,” meaning, “You are cleansed from your sin.”

Then Yahweh on His throne said, "I have a message to give to the people. Whom shall I send?" Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me."

The call of Isaiah. Startling, majestic, amazing. But what does Isaiah 6 have to do with Luke 5? Luke 5 is another call of God, startling and amazing. The call of Simon Peter parallels the call of Isaiah which echoes your call in Holy Baptism.

The first thing we notice in the call of Isaiah and in the call of Simon is that God takes the initiative. Yahweh appeared to Isaiah. The Lord presented Himself to his soon-to-be prophet and messenger. Isaiah was given a vision of the holy, holy, holy God in His throne room, attended by His angels. God set up this meeting with Isaiah.

God also set up the meeting with Simon Peter. Simon and his partners, James and John, were cleaning their nets after a really bad night of fishing. They caught nothing. Jesus was teaching the crowds on the beach and was getting pushed back toward the lake. Jesus climbed into Simon's boat and asked him to push off a bit from shore so that He might teach the people from the boat. God set up this meeting with Simon.

God took the initiative in meeting with Isaiah, Simon Peter, and with you. God took the initiative to call you as His own child and heir, a disciple of Jesus Christ, in your Baptism. In the last chapter of Matthew, Jesus—true God and true Man—set up or instituted Baptism. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18–20 ESV). Our Lord Jesus commands Baptism. He established this Sacrament, joining water to God's Word and His triune name in order to make you His dear children and disciples.

It is God who comes to us in Baptism even as He came to Isaiah and to Simon. We are brought as infants to the font by our parents or guardians solely at the command of Christ. We had nothing to do with our meeting God in the waters of Baptism. In fact, Baptism is totally God's doing. Luther reminds us of this in the Large Catechism, "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is still truly God's own work" (LC IV 10). God takes the initiative to call His servants and disciples.

But how can this be? Isaiah was a man of unclean lips dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips. He was an unholy sinner. He was doomed to death. Simon Peter, when he saw the great catch of fish, realized that He was in the presence of the Divine, "Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter echoed Isaiah— "I'm unclean and in the presence of God. I'm surely doomed to death." We, too, in our sinfulness fear the presence of the holy, holy, holy Lord of heaven and earth, the God of angel armies, the Almighty. And yet it was the Lord of hosts who took on human flesh and dwelt among sinners. He got into Peter's boat. He showed up to call Isaiah. In Baptism, the Lord Christ invites sinners to be washed and cleansed by water and the Word. "Here is water," the Ethiopian said to Philip, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Nothing! Not even our sins and sinfulness keep God from us. He comes to us in His mercy and grace, makes us clean by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit as the water is applied in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is as if the coal from the altar touched our lips—your sins are forgiven. You are clothed in the robe of Christ's own righteousness and holiness. You are made God's child and heir of life everlasting through Jesus' blood and

righteousness. There is now no reason for fear. God has cleansed you in Jesus. He has made you right for His kingdom and fit for His service.

God reassured both Isaiah and Peter, who were afraid, with His mercy and grace. God did not condemn Isaiah. "Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for," God said through His angel. Jesus spoke to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch people." Jesus did not condemn Peter, a sinful man. He granted Him forgiveness and called him to service. As the Christ said to Nicodemus, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17 ESV).

This Divine reassurance was not just for Peter or Isaiah, but for you as well. Should we be justly condemned for our sinfulness and our sins? Oh yes! That's why Isaiah and Simon were afraid. God is holy, without sin, and we humans are not. But in His grace and mercy God sent forth His Son, "born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4–5 ESV). The Son of the Most High left His heavenly armies and took on human flesh in order to live a pure and holy life in humanity's place. Jesus Christ, very God of very God, did what we cannot do. He acted in our place under God's Law and kept it perfectly for us. Then Jesus took sinful, unclean humanity's place under God's wrath and judgment against sin. He bore our sins in His body on the tree of the cross (1 Peter 2:24). He suffered hell itself on that cross, being forsaken by God the Father. Christ shed His holy, precious blood to make atonement for our sin, taking away our guilt: "The blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7 ESV).

God the Father's reassurance to you is that your guilt is taken away; your sin atoned for by Jesus' blood shed for you on the cross. You are made clean to stand before the Lord in righteousness and holiness forever. In Baptism, God the Holy Spirit applies this righteousness and holiness to you personally. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11 ESV). Thus, God declares you to be His child and an heir of all the gifts of salvation. Forgiveness and eternal life are yours.

Having cleansed and assured Isaiah and Simon Peter, the Lord commissioned them as His servants, His disciples. Isaiah would go and speak God's Word to the people of Israel. Peter would go and speak the Good News of Jesus as an apostle. The power and ability to serve the Lord was gifted to them by Christ through the Holy Spirit. The commission to be disciples of Christ is also yours in Baptism. You are baptized and taught the Word so that you might go out in your every-day callings and make more disciples—catching people for the Lord Jesus as you share what Christ has done for you in His death and resurrection.

Like all of Jesus' followers of every time and place, you have been given the great task of catching people by speaking the Word of the Gospel, telling others about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that is for them. It's a Good News message to all people that says, "Do not be afraid. You are not lost and condemned. God the Father loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for all your sins and to win your forgiveness and eternal life. Your guilt is truly taken away. There is now life and salvation for everyone who trusts in Jesus as Lord and Savior." Your Gospel outreach to neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and family members is accomplished because Jesus Himself empowers the efforts to speak His

Good News. You can be certain that there is nothing to fear when Jesus is at the center of your discipleship at home, at work, at school, and in the world.

Tomorrow morning then, as you head off to work or school or whatever your day holds for you, perhaps make a little sign that says, Gone Fishin'. Let that be your reminder of how the Lord Jesus might use you, His baptized child and disciple, to share His Good News with someone. Amen.