

Launch out into the deep

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Preacher: Rev David Meredith

[0 : 00] Well friends, let's look in the Bible, Luke chapter 5, Luke chapter 5, verse 4.

So launch out into the deep, launch out into the deep.

Two weeks ago, one of my friends who's a minister was involved in a mission in one of the large universities in Scotland.

And as part of that mission, what happened was that there was like an evangelistic panel evening. And various people who were not believers would field questions to the panel about issues of the Christian faith.

And one of the questions which was given to the panel was, are you afraid of death? And immediately the panelist said, no, Jesus has conquered death.

[1 : 21] Now my friend was uneasy about that. He was uneasy not because of what the man said, because what the man said was absolutely true.

Jesus has indeed conquered death and we need not fear death. But what struck him was the apparent insincerity of what he said or the way he said it.

In other words, it seemed to many people to be just an empty slogan. And my friend stood up and my friend said, well, to be honest, there is a sense in which although I know I am redeemed, I know I am going to heaven, yet there is a sense in which I still have fears.

And isn't that the experience of the people of God? There are very few of us who are lacking in any fear. Even in the very edge of Jordan, our anxious fears do not subside.

Even when we are faced with the most momentous situation, perhaps it is not until we get there that God gives us the grace to go on.

[2 : 35] But the point of that is that Christian slogans, if you like, can often be just that. We often say what we are supposed to say.

And we say the right words. But they can very often be empty if we don't have that experience. And one of the most famous Christian expressions of faith is that great statement from the New Testament.

Jesus is Lord. There is evidence that that was perhaps a very early example of Christian profession of faith. When the believers in the New Testament church would be brought into the church, they would have to make public confession that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And perhaps that is the main point, the big story, if you like, in this passage in Luke chapter 5. Let's look at it together.

It's the calling, of course, of Simon Peter. It's located in a very strange place here in chapter 5 in Luke's Gospel. Some suggest that there was an earlier calling and they fell away.

[3 : 52] Because the material largely of this part of the Bible is a year on. It's at the beginning of year 2 of Jesus' three-year public ministry.

Others suggest that Luke is simply telling it again later on. Or it's in a different time sequence in the Bible. But here we see that the situation is very well known to all of us here.

Jesus has been incredibly busy. The people pressed on him. And this is a very busy, busy time in the experience of our Lord.

And he's almost being pushed back as he's speaking on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. And there's this massive crowd. And they're pushing him back.

And even here in the introduction, we see something quite instructive. And even in the introduction, we see that effective Christian work demands creative and sometimes unusual thinking.

[4 : 53] This was some pulpit, wasn't it? The pulpit of a boat. You see, Jesus was speaking of the good news of the kingdom. And there were physical problems.

The crowd was pushing in. And so he thought, what am I going to do? And so to enable the communication of the Gospel, he went on a boat.

And he began to speak because of the natural acoustics of being able to speak over water. You know how easily and how well sound travels over water.

What a contrast this was to the rabbis. The rabbis would never do this. The rabbis were stiff, formal and inflexible. The rabbis were men who stood on protocol.

The rabbis were men who in their ministry did not know anything of the freshness of the Holy Spirit. The rabbis would quote past authorities.

[5 : 53] They would not deviate from the tradition handed down by the rabbinical schools over the years. They would only speak from the synagogues, from the official temple position.

That's all they would do. There was a rigidity and a stiffness about them. But Jesus, we read in the Bible, he spoke, yes, in the temple.

Yes, in the synagogue. But also in a house, in a cemetery. He spoke on a mountain. He spoke in a desert. You see, for Jesus, the message was more powerful than the location.

You see, the kingdom of God is not of this world. And it's the message of the kingdom which is so important. I think we see another thing here again, just in the introduction.

He called Simon and then immediately he used Simon. He used his boat. Doesn't that show a wisdom in the Savior's psychology and spirituality here?

[7 : 00] Because Jesus knew that those who would grow in faith must also be used and put what they have at the disposal of him. And so there's lessons there for the church.

That we will see our people grow when their gifts and their possessions are used for the glory of the kingdom. Simon, Peter and his friends, what did they have?

They had two boats. Two ships. And they were given to the Savior for his use. They were going to be employed to speak of him.

But it's then that we have the problem. And now we move into, as it were, the heart of the passage. You see, there's a problem in verse 4, isn't there? It says, Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep.

You see, the problem for Simon was this. Simon would have been at ease letting Jesus use his boat for a pulpit. Because that's Jesus' job, if you pardon the expression.

[8 : 09] Jesus was an itinerant preacher. He was a rabbi. Therefore, he was quite happy for the boat to be used as a pulpit. But then Simon would have expected that when he hands the boat back to Simon Peter, The boat belongs to Simon for fishing.

That's Simon's domain. Yes, Jesus is a preacher. Preachers are supposed to have pulpits. And they stay there. Simon is a fisherman. He knows all about fishing and fishing boats.

Therefore, that's his domain. And so there was a compartmentalization, wasn't there? Jesus in his pulpit. Simon in his fishing boat.

And never the twain would meet. Jesus had no locusts in the fishing boat of Simon Peter. And that touches on a major issue of our lives.

Yes, he's the Jesus of religion. But not the Jesus of work. Not the Jesus of family. He's the Jesus of the pulpit.

[9 : 13] But not the Jesus of the fishing boat. Let's look at three things I think we notice in this passage. The first thing we notice here is in verse 4.

What's that? I've called it the request. But it's really more than that. It's a command, isn't it? The request. Launch out into the deep.

Now the first thing here we must notice is it did not make sense. It did not make sense. In verse 2, they were washing their nets. The Greek scholars tell us that they were very specific nets.

They were called trammel nets. And trammel nets were used by the fishermen in those days. They were made of white linen. And so they would be very big white nets.

And of course they would be visible to the fish during the day. The fish would clearly see the nets. And even fish knew that it was not good for their health to swim into the nets.

[10 : 12] Therefore the last thing you would do is fish during the day. And of course these fishermen then only fished at night. Fishing during the day just did not make sense.

And Jesus said that they were fishing into the deep water. Launch out into the deep. And really that is even worse. Because you do not get fish down in the deep, deep water.

Especially in the lake of Gennesaret. How did Simon feel here? Jesus was a carpenter. And a part time preacher.

He was an experienced fisherman. And yet Jesus says do it. Launch out into the deep. He challenges Simon's wisdom.

All that years of experience. Simon would most probably have been a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation fisherman. Passed down through the tradition.

[11:15] It was in his blood. He knew everything there was to know about fishing. Jesus was a carpenter. He challenges his wisdom. But then he challenges his will.

Simon Peter didn't want to do it. We've been toiling all night. I wonder how are we this morning. Maybe our wisdom is being challenged. Maybe the preconceptions that we have had about our own standing before God. Maybe the preconceptions and our thought pattern.

And our own wills dominate our Christianity. Our wisdom has been challenged. But also our will is being challenged.

We simply don't want to do what God is calling us to do. Is that where many of us are today? It is clear as day where God is calling us.

[12:18] Launch out into the deep. Go for it. But our wisdom says no. And our wills are an impregnable fortress.

There is nothing more revealing of our relationship to Jesus. Than our response to his commands. I was reading last week about a South American tribe.

And there was a massive response to the gospel. There was at least a verbal response. As these people en masse received Christ as it were.

And they had the right words. But their problem was that there was no connection between their words and their action. They were still rooted in animism.

They were still rooted in elements of their culture. Which were clearly against God's will. And yet their mouths professed faith. And their lifestyles denied it.

[13:17] Christianity is obedience. We repent in response to obedience. We pray in response to obedience.

We witness in response to obedience. We love in response to obedience. By this will all men know that you are my disciples.

Because you have love. One to another. And it is a mark of our maturity and grace. How we love the people of God. Especially the people of God.

Or the people of the world. That we do not want to love. It is not a feeling thing. It is not intuitive. Sorry. It's a command thing.

And so he is saying here. Launch out. Into the deep. And so the request here is.

[14:14] That we abandon the autonomy of our lives. That we surrender to the lordship of this Jesus. And there may be folk here this morning. Who in their Christian life.

Whatever sphere it is. And the level of application here is wide. The request is launch out into the deep. It may be at a very basic level.

That you are a believer. And yet you have not professed faith. And yet you think it is a major thing. It is an insurmountable wall. Your wisdom says I don't want to do that. Your will says.

I don't want to do that. Every instinct in your being says. I don't want to do that. And yet Jesus says. Take it. This is my body which is given for you.

Jesus says. That we have to tell others. Launch out into the deep. Maybe there is an area of our lives just now.

[15:14] Maybe there is a habit we are involved in. A lifestyle choice. That we have to make. Maybe our Christian lives for the last few months. Have been really really bad. And we know what is causing it.

And God says get rid of it. Maybe there is a business decision. Maybe there is a ministry opportunity. And we are shying away. But behind it the church is saying.

Our friends are saying. God is saying. Look this is of God. Launch out into the deep. It is a command. It is a command. It is the first thing we see here in verse 4.

The request. The second thing we notice. Is the response. I like this response. Verse 5. Do you know why I like it?

Because it is so real. Master he says. We have toiled all the night. And have taken nothing. Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

[16:15] I like this response because it is so real. People often present the Christian faith as perfect people.

We see this very often in Christian biography. You read the biography of one of the saints of God. Of old. And you say. Did they never make a mistake? Did they have no doubts? And the opposite effect happens.

Instead of being inspired and encouraged by these saints of old. We are actually demotivated. Because we are not like them. How different the Bible. How different the Bible.

We read in the Bible there are men and women who wrestled. Men and women who were disobedient. Men and women who fell. Men and women who had messy lives.

David. Elijah. Simon. Peter. All these folk. They struggled with their faith. And we see it there in verse 5. Master he says.

[17:16] Can you not detect it? It is an amalgam isn't it? An amalgam of despair. Doubt and disagreement. Oh master we have toiled all the night.

And have taken nothing. A phrase comes to mind. You cannot teach your granny to suck eggs. Is that not how Simon Peter would have felt? I am a fisherman. We have been working 8 hours out there. And we have caught nothing. We are professionals.

But look at that next phrase. Nevertheless. At thy word. I will let down. The net. You see.

That is faith. In the midst of all these struggles. In the midst of his despair. Doubt. And even disagreement. He says.

[18:16] Nevertheless. I will do it. Jesus is Lord. You see. Instead of a sugar coated. Evangelical cliché. That trips off our tongue.

So very very readily. This is someone. Who actually obeys. He acknowledges. Jesus authority over his possessions. He acknowledges. Jesus authority over his plans.

He notices. Jesus authority. Nazareth. The son of God. The glorious Messiah. The only redeemer. Of God's elect. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is king. He is sovereign. Over the whole universe. And this is where we see. That grace has triumphed.

Because talk has been turned into action. It is incredibly easy to talk. It is incredibly easy to come up with all the orthodox clichés.

[19:20] To talk the talk as they say. But here is Simon Peter. Who at the end of the day. Was actually walking the talk. Nevertheless. At thy word.

I will let down the net. See the kingdom of God. The word says. Is not a matter. Of words. How about.

Launching out into the deep. In your life. Obeying Christ. In an area. Which goes against. All. Your natural. Instincts.

What would happen. If you profess your faith today. What would the talk in your street be. Folks. Who are they? They're not from one of the. Traditional. Big free church families. In the town. You know. You know. How. So often. In our. Culture.

[20:19] We meet folk. And say. Who are you? And who's your father? Who's your uncle? Who's your grandfather? And how. Discouraging it is. When we come up with some name. And you can almost see the disappointment.

In the other person's face. Because. They are not one of the great luminaries in the church. And you say. That's me. I'm just on the edge here.

This membership stuff. This public profession. Is not for me. My instincts say. That I must stay in the periphery. My instincts say. That I am not for the inner circle.

My instincts say. Friends. Your instincts wrong. Jesus says.

Launch out. Into. The deep. He is saying. I'm preparing something tomorrow. I am preparing a very special meal.

[21:19] And at that special meal. There is going to be food. And it's going to be tasty food. There is going to be companionship. There is going to be fellowship. There is going to be sustenance.

There is going to be marvelous things there. But it's not for me. Launch out. Into. The deep.

Perhaps for the first time in your life. Do something. That your inner mechanism say. Is crazy. Do something. That your inner mechanism say.

Is not even right. It is right. Because Jesus is saying it. Are you safe? Safe. Safe in your anonymity. Why not today? Be safe. No longer in your anonymity. But in the Savior's obedience.

[22 : 24] Yes. We see the request. We see the response. Nevertheless. Thy word. I will. Let down the net.

And the third thing we notice here is the result. I think there was a threefold result. Wasn't there? The first one was this. The ship.

Was filled with fish. When they had done this. They enclosed a great multitude of fishes. On their net break. It's almost as if.

By some unseen force. Every single fish. In the lake of Gennesaret. Was guided into these. Big white trammel nets. This fish just swam.

Right into them. So many shoals. That the nets began to break. A great multitude of fishes. And their net break.

[23 : 23] What do we see here? We see the generosity of God. Don't we? The picture is almost comic. Isn't it? It says. In verse 7.

They filled both the ships. So that they began to sink. It would almost be comic. If you saw two fishing boats. Coming in to Stornham. And they're so loaded with fish. That they're right down to the gunwales.

They're almost sinking. It would be. It would be really quite funny. Yes. The command was unconventional. Fish. During the day.

In the deep. The command was unconventional. But so was the blessing. And here we see the generosity of God. You know. Mean people have a mean God.

At least that's how they think of God. Generous people have a generous God. And our God is generous. Look at this world. Did he give us a black and white world?

[24 : 20] No. He gave us a world full of color. Full of variety. Full of different shapes. Full of different textures. Full of different shapes. That's how God works.

He is instinctively generous. At the feeding of the 5,000. There were 12 basketfuls. Left over. I was recently preaching down in the west coast.

In Argyllshire. And I went for lunch with a woman. And it was incredible. The food in the table. It was almost again comic. And as I was driving away. She was literally throwing food into the car.

Apples and fruit and things. Because she was giving, giving, giving. Is that not how God works? There is nothing mean or measured in God.

The word says that when the new wine comes. The Old Testament prophet said. When the new wine of the gospel comes. It will drip from the mountains.

[25 : 23] Such will be the luxury. Such will be the luxuriance of God's grace. That it will just drip from the mountains. How does the old verse go?

His love has no limits. His grace knows no measure. His power has no boundary known unto men. For out of his infinite riches in Jesus.

He giveth and giveth and giveth again. Is that our expectation of the supper? As we are gathered round. Presided by the saviour.

And he gives gifts to men. The word says that. And as we are there. And he is giving them and giving them and giving them. So that our cup is full and running over.

That was the result. The first result. Of Simon Peter's obedience. The ship was filled with fish. Here we see the sovereignty of God over creation.

[26 : 27] When God made man. He gave him dominion. The word says. Over the fish of the sea. And that was lost in the fall. When man sinned. And fell into that estate of sin and misery.

Losing all the benefits. That God had originally given him in Eden. And it's almost here. A sense of that being restored. Doesn't it? Because in Christ the sovereignty is restored.

Christ has dominion over the fish. He sends them into the nets. The result. The ship was filled with fish.

There was a second result though. His heart was filled with worship. In verse 8. When Simon Peter saw it. He fell down at Jesus knees.

Saying. Depart from me. For I am a sinful man. O Lord. This is a mark of a man who was a believer. He was not absorbed with the fish.

[27 : 32] He was absorbed with God. And this is what happens. How would the materialist react? His eye would have been in the premium.

His eye would have been in the fish. He would have said. Keep close to me Jesus. And within a few years. We will make enough money. And I will be able to retire. And help you full time.

Together. We will make a fortune. No. His eye was not in the fish. His eye was on God. And isn't that something we have to recover in the church today?

It is a focus on God. A God centred worship. A God centred preaching. Instead of our minds. We are going all other sorts of nonsense.

That our minds are taken up with. In the presence of God. Men and women tremble. Before we join the company of Jesus.

[28 : 29] We must recognize that we are not worthy. And indeed that's what his response was. Depart from me. I am a sinful man. That's how you feel today.

Isn't it? I don't belong here. A few weeks ago. We had a visit from friends. That we had not seen for many years.

And they were so elegantly dressed. It was like an explosion. In a Burberry factory. They were so neat. And so tidy.

And you know how we felt. We felt uncomfortable. Undressed. Unclean.

And that's how you feel. When you are in the presence. Of something. Or someone. Who is holy. He saw.

[29 : 31] Not just the power of Jesus. He saw the holiness of Jesus. Depart from me. For I am a sinful man. Oh Lord. Holiness has a Hebrew. A root to it.

Not only of otherness. Which is the traditional. Interpretation. And of course it's right. Holiness does mean the otherness of God. But holiness also means the weight of God.

The sheer presence of God. The sheer Godness of God. The otherness of God. That makes us tremble. His life.

His boats. Were filled with fish. His heart. Was filled with worship. And in verse 11. His life was filled with service.

When they had brought their ships to land. They forsook all. And followed him.

[30 : 33] There was Peter uneducated. Uncontrollable. A bit of a liability. Was Peter. Wasn't he? And Jesus said.

From now on. I will make you to become. Fisher of men. We know the story. Don't we? The day of Pentecost. He was fishing again.

Wasn't he? And he threw out his net. For a draft there. And what happened? Three thousand people. Were added unto the church.

This was not Simon Peter's ability. This is God's ability. This is how there is a sense of excitement. Within the church of God. Because it does not depend on external things.

Because when God is at work. Incredible things can happen. This is how revival comes. Or this is a mark of revival. When the spirit of God comes.

[31 : 31] And brings people in. Because of his power and sovereignty. It's not our ability. It's God's. A lot of commentators say this passage.

This pericope. This section. Is in many ways like an acted parable. One commentator says. The preaching on the shore. He says.

Conjures up visions and images. Of the covenant of Abraham. Remember when God said. That their descendants would be as numerous. As the stars in the heaven.

And as numerous. As the grains of sand in the seashore. And so it's almost here. Coming to fruition. Isn't it? As Jesus preaches in the seashore.

And has all these grains of sand. And the descendants. Are coming in. They left everything. To follow Jesus.

[32 : 28] Launch out into the deep. Well the primary application is. Yes we do prepare ourselves. For the Lord's table tomorrow.

Maybe some of us have said. In the past. To be quite frank. We've got very little from it. What size was your container. When you came.

Did you come with a wee jam jar? Did you come. With a barrel. And ask God to fill it.

What's your expectation. What's your view of God? He giveth.

And giveth. And giveth. Again. Maybe there's some other area of our lives. And maybe today is.

[33 : 32] The big day. Launch. Out. Into. The deep. If there is success in fishing for fish.

Under the authority of Jesus. Maybe there is someone who feels called to. The ministry of the word. And their background is like Simon Peter.

They are not. Rabbis. They are not. Schooled in these things. Is there any reason to doubt. That the Lord who didn't supply the fish for Simon Peter.

Will not supply the fish. For you. There is a final word. I am in the privileged position perhaps. Of knowing hardly any of you. But there is one thing I can say. About the congregation this morning. And one thing I can say. With some degree of certainty.

[34 : 35] There are only two groups here. Only two. Fish. Or fishermen. Fish.

Or fishermen. And even more wonderful. The fish can become a fisherman.

In the twinkling of an eye. Betwixt the stirrup and the ground. I mercy sought. I mercy found.

Friends. I mercy found. I mercy found. I mercy found. Friends. Whoever you are. Launch. Launch. Out.

Into. The deep. Let's pray. Eternal God. Eternal God.

[35 : 39] We. We. Confess. Our nothingness. We. And yet. And yet. We acknowledge. The saviour's power.

Open our hearts. Give us the strength. To launch. Out. Into the deep. Help us to gather in a shoal.

The likes has never been seen. In this place. Give us the grace. To say. Nevertheless.

At thy word. I will let down. The net. Amen.