



PART 6: THE JESUS MOVEMENT BEGINS

By Ben Froese

Luke 5:1-11, 27-32

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.

...²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

³¹ Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

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Some have said that Christianity might best be understood not as an institution but as a movement. In the book of Acts, we see that those in the early church often referred to themselves as followers of The Way – belonging to this movement.

There's a sense in which chapter 5 is where the "Jesus Movement" begins. The same movement that we are called into and called to continue today.

I. The One Prerequisite to Following Jesus

In verse 4, Jesus tells Simon Peter, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." – Luke 5:4b

The text seems to indicate that Simon Peter and his companions had packed it in for the night. More: that they had already gone through a bunch of their clean-up process – verse 2 says they were "washing their nets."

But we see Simon's faith demonstrated in his reply...
"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." – Luke 5:5

And after the miraculous catch of fish, here's Simon Peter's reply:

"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"
– Luke 5:8

Commentator Darrell Bock writes the following:

"Peter does not feel worthy of Jesus' blessing or of making such an acquaintance. He believes that God works with and uses only the pious... What Peter does not realize is that admitting one's inability and sin is the best prerequisite for service, since then one can depend on God. Peter's confession becomes his résumé for service."

– Darrell Bock, Luke: The NIV Application Commentary, pp. 154-155

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There is one prerequisite to following Jesus, and it's this:

- Recognize and acknowledge "I'm not all that."
- Recognize and acknowledge you do not have it all together.
- Recognize and acknowledge that you need God's mercy and forgiveness. Better said: you need HIM.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' longest teaching section in the whole Bible begins in this way: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*"

- Matthew 5:3.

To be "poor in spirit" is to recognize one's spiritual bankruptcy. To recognize one's need for God.

And later in today's text, we hear Jesus say:

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." - Luke 5:31b-32

The one prerequisite to following Jesus is to recognize and acknowledge your weakness and inability.

II. Leaving Everything to Follow

In the parallel stories to these two call scenes in the other gospels - Matthew and Mark - it's the immediacy and urgency of following Jesus that gets emphasized.

Matthew 4:20: "At once they left their nets and followed him."

Matthew 4:22: "...immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Mark 2:13b: "...Levi got up and followed him."

But in Luke's telling of these stories, the emphasis is a little different.

Verse 11: "So they [that's Simon Peter and his companions] pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." - Luke 5:11

Verse 28: "and Levi got up, left everything and followed him." - Luke 5:28

The Greek word πάντα (“everything”) only occurs in Luke Gospel.

This indicates that Luke wants us to pay attention to a crucial part of what following Jesus is all about: To follow Jesus means to leave everything. The extent to which it will change your life might be bigger than you thought.

Jesus calls us to leave everything to follow him. But he only does so after leaving everything to pursue us. In Philippians 2, we read that Jesus,

*“Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used
to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!”* – Philippians 2:6–8

Jesus gave up heaven for you and me. He gave his life for you and me. So that our sin could be taken care of once and for all. So that the circle could be widened and we could be a part of this family. So that we could be a part of this movement.

N.T. Wright writes the following:

*“When Jesus calls, he certainly does demand everything,
but only because he has already given everything himself,
and has plans in store, for us and the world, that we
would never have dreamed of.”*
– N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*

III. Followers Invite Others to Follow

Jesus calls Simon Peter and his companions to follow him. He calls Levi to follow him. And yes, they “leave everything” in response.

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And something we need to see: Jesus doesn't say, "Follow me... I'll help you to deal with the sin issues in your life... I'll help you to grow to become a mature Christian... and then I'll start using you to minister to others." Rather...

Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." - Luke 5:10b

Right from the get-go, Jesus gives Peter a new vision to live into. Right from the get-go, he tells Peter, "I've got a job for you to do. I've got a new purpose for you to step into. I've got bigger fish for you to fry. Better said: I've got far more valuable fish for you to catch - *humans* who are made in the image of God... people whom I will go on to give my life for."

And I especially love how Levi gets this right away. Jesus didn't have to tell him to do anything. He just gets it.

Verse 28: "*and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.*" - Luke 5:28

And then the next verse, verse 29:

"*Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.*" - Luke 5:29

You do not have to be a veteran Christian in order to share your faith with others. You do not have to reach a certain level of Christian experience before God will start using you.

To be a disciple is to be a sent one too. Followers of Jesus invite others to follow.

¹² One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- Luke 6:12-16

Luke is the only gospel that includes that line, “whom he also designated apostles” (v. 13).

To be an apostle is to be a “sent one.” It’s a part of the identity of every Jesus follower, and something that every Jesus follower is called to live into.

Inviting others to follow Jesus might not be as complicated as you think. Maybe it looks like a simple invitation to come to a church service – to “come and see.”

Let’s consider: Who are the people in our lives whom we could extend a simple invitation to?

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Open Up

Have you ever had an experience where you were invited to do something that changed the direction of your life? What was it, and what made you say yes?

Dig In

Read Luke 5:1-11 and 27-32

1. Does anything surprise you in these two call scenes? What are some things that stand out to you or catch your attention?
2. Peter responds to Jesus by saying, “I am a sinful man.” Why do you think recognizing our own need and weakness is described as the prerequisite for following Jesus? What might it look like for you to daily come back to a place of humbly acknowledging your sin before the Lord? (See Luke 5:8; Matthew 5:3)
3. Both Peter and his companions, as well as Levi, leave everything behind to follow Jesus. Was there a moment in your story when you “left everything to follow,” so to speak? In your current life, what do you think you would be most reluctant to leave behind if Jesus asked you to?
4. The message emphasized that following Jesus means more than simply “inviting Jesus into our lives” – it means allowing him to lead our lives. What is the difference between those two ways of thinking about relationship with Jesus? How does this relate to you today?
5. Levi immediately throws a banquet and invites his friends to meet Jesus. What can we learn from Levi about sharing our faith with others – even before we feel like we know enough or are “ready”?
6. Who are the people in your life whom God might be calling you to share the good news of Jesus with? Could it look like a simple invitation to come to church – to “come and see”?

Pray

Take some time to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Also, pray for those people who came up in your conversation on question 6. Pray for opportunities to share the good news, perhaps through extending a simple invitation.