

“Follow Me” // Luke 5:1–11 // *In Step* #14

It’s great to start out with some good news: Over the last 2 weeks, we’ve had 99 people profess faith in Christ at this church. 99! Why don’t we give God thanks for that.

Luke 5, if you have your Bible. Before we jump into the passage today I want to throw out a picture of who our church is and where we are going, because I think Luke 5 explains beautifully why we do this.

Our mission statement at The Summit is **“Following the Holy Spirit, to create a movement of disciple-making-disciples in RDU and around the world.”** A movement of DMD’s: we think that’s more important than simply growing a big audience.

Sometimes we think of the book of Acts as the **“good ol days”** of the church. **Small groups** regularly prayed through the night. **Peter and Paul** preached with breathtaking boldness before seething Caesars and cantankerous crowds. **Martyrs cheerfully sacrificed** their lives in the Coliseum. **Peter’s hankies** healed the sick and **liars got struck dead** in the offering. Back then, we think, the church felt like an **unstoppable movement**.

The only problem, church historians say, is that **had you been alive during this time it wouldn’t have felt** like an unstoppable movement. Here’s what I mean: **The best estimates** point to a **total of 7530 believers** worldwide at the end of the first century.¹ Total! **Let that sink in. 7530!** We have nearly twice that many in The Summit Church every weekend!

- **In fact, Origen, who was born late in the 2nd century**, described the Christian movement in his day, a hundred years after that, as a few scattered communities, **“geographically broad, but numerically insignificant.”**²
- **And yet, by 312 AD, Christians had become so numerous** that Emperor Constantine decided to convert to Christianity *for political reasons*—over half of the Roman Empire had converted to Christianity!

How do you go from less than 10K in 100 A.D. to over half the Roman Empire by 312? Think about it: **The early church had very little** compared to what we have today: They didn’t have big budgets or **grand auditoriums**; no publishing presses, no TV stations, no representation in the Senate. But what they did have, church historians say, was an ingrained sense that the **Great Commission belonged** to everybody.³ They believed that every **Christian, and every church, was called to multiply**.

They believed what I’m going to show you today from Luke 5. And that made Christianity take off.

Do you remember that **annoying math riddle** from middle school where you had a choice between receiving \$10,000 a day for 30 days or getting \$0.01 doubled each day, and you were asked which you would choose?

Well, like most middle school students. I chose the \$10K daily. I mean, think about it. How much could I do with \$10,000? In 30 days, I’d have **\$300,000**. I could buy every pair of Air Jordan’s on the market, every video game available on the Atari 2600, and even one of those DeLoreans like Michael J Fox drove in *Back to the Future!*

¹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 161.

² Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.10

³ See Stephen Neill, *The History of Christian Mission* and Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 5-8.

But then my math teacher explained that I should have started with the penny. Sure, after the first week, you'd only have a couple of bucks, but by the end of the month, I'd have **\$10,737,418.23**. I asked our CFO if I could bring 10M up here with me and he said no. But that's a whole fleet full of DeLoreans!

That's the power of multiplication. Summit, I don't fancy myself a cultural analyst, but I've wondered if we're seeing the **end of the era where the megachurch is seen as the answer** to reaching our community. **I don't mean megachurches are going away** or they are bad. **What we do** here is an important part of gathering people and making the gospel known in the Triangle and we'll accommodate as many as will come. What I mean is that **over the last 100 years in America we've witnessed the building of some of the largest, most impressive megachurches in Christian history**. We've seen preachers like Billy Graham gather crowds of sizes the Apostles never dreamed of. And yet, get this, despite all this building, the percentage of people going to church each weekend in America has gone down, not up.

What if God was calling us to a new strategy--an ancient one--one that focused not on the church staff or size of the audience, but on you, the individual disciple of Jesus?

Get this: Today, there are **more Baptist churches in America**--just Southern Baptist, in fact--than the total number of **Starbucks, Subways, and McDonald's** in America combined.

- What if each church saw that it was their responsibility to **multiply**?
- What if **each believer in these churches** saw the Great Commission as *their* responsibility? What if **just a handful** in each did?
- **Might not our great grandchildren** look back on this time period and see these as "the good ol' days"?

But what this means is a change of emphasis in the mission of the church. It means we **won't be focused merely on church expansion**, we'll be focused on church multiplication. And, we won't just be focused on a massive audience, but on a movement of disciple-making-disciples.

Francis Chan said it well:

"Long gone are the days when we should be content with a bunch of people who sing out loud, don't divorce, and give to missions. I now want to know I can drop off any member of my church in a city, and that person could grow in Jesus, make disciples, and help start a church."

Is this true of us? We're getting there, but let me tell you how I see it sometimes: The church, I've heard it said, often functions like an ACC football game. At an ACC game you have 22 guys in desperate need of rest surrounded by 22,000 cutouts of people in desperate need of exercise (oh, wait, that's just 2020).

- Or think of it like this. Say you were watching Super Bowl LIV and Tom Brady...**RUN THE PLAY!**)

All this leads to Luke 5, and to something I want to call you to in a couple of weeks. In a couple of weeks I want you to renew your commitment to being a disciple and to making disciples. **One of the things we've talked about as we emerge from lockdown** is that we look at this season like a church relaunch. As we come back, what **new ministries** should we start? Which ones should we stop?

Well, part of this relaunch is I want you to recommit to being more than just a spectator here. I want you to commit to being part of the mission. I want you to commit to running the play, not just standing in the huddle. **Are you a spectator or an actual disciple?** Whether or not you make this commitment will reveal a lot about where your heart is on that.

For Jesus, there was no such thing as a follower who wasn't actively engaged in the mission. Let me show you:

Luke 5: 1 As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, he was standing by Lake Gennesaret [another name for the Sea of Galilee]. **(PIC)** **2** He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets.

3 He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon (Peter), and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then he sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat. (This served 2 purposes: it gave Jesus a little distance from those who were wanting to touch him or get his autograph or take a selfie with him or whatever. Secondly, water, of course, serves as a natural amplifier. You ever stand in a boat on a quiet lake and yell at someone across the water? It's amazing.)

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon Peter, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Here's what a **NT fishing net** looked like...

Jesus tells him, "Go out a little deeper and try again." Here's the problem. That's what Peter has been doing all night. Casting and picking up. Casting and picking up. He's a professional, and he knows when the fish aren't 'biting' and Jesus telling him to give it just one more toss is a little insulting. Plus, Jesus ISN'T a fisherman, he's a carpenter, and Peter is like, "Listen, if I've got a wobbly chair, I'll call you, but don't be giving me advice about fishing."

5 "Master," Simon Peter replied (respectfully, but for sure with a little irritation), "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. PAUSE But if you say so, I'll let down the nets." (I call this 'the pause with eternal significance.' Your heart is filled with doubt but you decide to obey anyway. How Peter's life changed because of that pause! Can you look back on your life and see places where your heart was filled with doubt but you decided to obey anyway? That pause of faith can make an eternal difference in your life!)

6 When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. **7** So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Get away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

10 "Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people." (This net, Peter--you're going to throw it out, and it's going to come back not with fish worth only a few pennies, but with people worth more than all the gold of Fort Knox) **11** Then they brought the boats to land, left everything (their nets and all), and followed him.

3 Qualities Necessary to Be A Disciple:

I. Awe (5:8)

A sense of awe. In Luke 5 Peter got overwhelmed by a glimpse of Jesus' power. So overwhelmed **8-When Simon Peter saw this**, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Get away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

That might seem an odd reaction, until you think about it. You see, when you are in the presence of greatness, your heart is filled with a weird mixture of attraction and repulsion. You are not sure if you want to draw close or run away..

- **I told you once my story about meeting MJ...** Why is that? Their greatness both attracts you and makes you feel small and unworthy.
- **Or here's another.** Some of you know the name "**Elisabeth Elliot.**" She's a very famous missionary whose husband, Jim Elliot, was martyred on the beaches of Ecuador with 4 of his colleagues in the 1950's. The books she wrote on the surrender to God's call had a massive impact on a whole generation, including me. Well, one of our pastors knew her family, and a few years ago, right before she died, he told me she was passing through Durham and wanted to know if I wanted to meet her. I was like, "Are you kidding me?" And he arranged the meeting. I was so excited—this was like a dream come true—but when I got in her presence I just wanted to leave. She was such a picture of selflessness and devotion and when I got into her presence all I could think about was how selfish I was and I just wanted to leave.

In the presence of true greatness, you're both attracted and you want to run away. That's what happened to Peter.

When Jesus calls people to follow him, he often begins with this overwhelming vision of terror.

- When God called the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to be his messenger, he first gave to Isaiah, Isa 6, a glimpse of his glory, so much so that Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me!" Which means, 'Let me be cursed. Let me be damned because I'm a man,' he said, "of unspeakable filth and a dirty mouth."⁴
- When Jesus called his friend John, in Revelation 1, to prepare his church for what was ahead, he gave to John a glimpse of his glory. John, who had been a friend of Jesus in his earthly life, was so overwhelmed at what he saw that he fell on his face, just sure he was going to die!⁵
- I will tell you that when God called me, he did it by first giving me a glimpse of his awesome power--how long eternity was and how terrible it would be to go into eternity as his enemy. It kept me up late many nights as a teenager, scared to death of dying and meeting God.

Why does Jesus do this? Why does he sometimes terrify you when he calls you? Because only awe compels obedience. **Until God is big to you, you'll never have the strength to obey him.** For some of you, I'd say that's the problem. You don't obey; you don't seek God, because God is distant to you; small; almost unreal.

- **One of my favorite stories to tell her is when I got invited by a group of fraternity guys to do a Bible Study in their fraternity (Navy Seal illus.)?** The problem is not your sexual desires are so big, but God is so small. When God becomes big to you, you'll be able to obey.
- If you have an obedience problem this weekend, it begins as an awe problem. God's not big enough to you.

Awe is the first quality of the disciple. But before we leave this point, I'd actually not be serving you well if I left you here. You see, **the awe Peter experienced here wasn't sufficient.** Peter, even after seeing Jesus this way, would still struggle with pride, and he'd still deny Jesus, and then, after his failure, flee from Jesus in shame and hiding.

⁴ John 12:48: John makes clear that who Isaiah was seeing was Jesus!

⁵ John MacArthur, "Characteristics of Jesus' Divinity, part 2" sermon preached with Grace to You on December 17, 2000.

Which makes the fact that Jesus repeats this miracle before Peter at the end of his life absolutely fascinating. You see, at the end of the Gospels, after the cross and resurrection, Jesus does this whole miracle again.

John 21: Peter is out fishing again. *This time Jesus appears to him from the shore and tells Peter*, who has again been out all night fishing and caught nothing, to try casting his net on the other side.

It starts with the same problem: Peter's been fishing all night and caught nothing. And in both stories, Peter doesn't initially recognize Jesus. In both stories, Jesus gives the same odd instructions: Go out into deep waters and try again, followed up by, "Now try the other side of the boat." In both stories, the final cast pulls in a miraculous haul.

But there's one big distinction in these stories, however. In both stories, Peter has a strong reaction to the miracle, but in the first story, our story in Luke 5, Peter tells Jesus to, "Get away from me." But in the second, John 21, after seeing the miracle, **"Then Simon Peter tied his outer clothing around him (for he had taken it off) and plunged into the sea."** John 21:7 Peter jumps out, naked except for his underwear, and swims to Jesus. **Talk about a difference!** In the first, Peter feels so unworthy that he just wants to get away. In the second, he feels so comfortable that he swims with all his might toward Jesus in just his underwear.

What makes the difference? This last one happened on the other side of the cross, where Peter saw just how much Jesus cared for him and how committed he was to him, even when he sinned. Peter had denied Jesus, yet Jesus still came for him. If anything, his love for Peter seemed even stronger after Peter's failure than it had before. Peter had seen how Jesus felt about him *even in* his failures. You see, this glorious Jesus who calls you to follow is not a Navy Seal father coming to threaten you, but a tender father coming to comfort you. He loves you just the same when you are wounded and when you struggle and fall as when you succeed.

Question: When you think about how Jesus feels about you *right now*, what do you think? When you think about Jesus before you in all of his glory, what emotion comes over you?

- **When I was little my dad took me out fishing**, and he always baited the hook for me. But then came that one day when he wanted me to do it on my own. It was like a coming of age. Did you have that experience? The worm is dirty and wiggling, and when you poke it, it writhes and this gross stuff comes out and we're like... that's how we think Jesus is with sinners. But that's not how he is. Everywhere we see him in the Gospel interacting with broken people, he moves toward them, rapidly.
 - When the prodigal son returns from traveling in the far country, the father is waiting and watching and picks up his robe to run to him.
 - When Jesus is on his way to a really important person's house, this presumptive social outcast, a diseased woman, tries to touch the hem of his garment. His response is to stop, put the VIP on hold, and calls her by a name that scholars say is the most intimate, tender term of affection used of anyone in the Gospels: precious daughter.
 - When Jesus looks over a rebellious Jerusalem, he's not filled with seething anger, but he breaks down and weeps over them.
- **When Jesus looks at the lives of those of us who have messed up our lives with sin, what does he feel? Anger? Disgust? Righteous wrath?** His first emotion is compassion. A compassion that makes him draw near. A compassion that makes him weep right alongside of us in our pain. Have you messed up? He's here today, and not in anger. He's here to restore and to save.
- Now, if you resist this, you will face his wrath, of course, but the point is the first emotion he feels is mercy and tenderness toward you.

- When **Jesus hangs on a cross next to a thief** whose sin and stupid decisions have ruined his whole life, and that thief utters the slightest prayer for mercy, Jesus, who is barely unable to speak himself, hoists himself up to assure the repentant thief that that very day he will welcome him into paradise.

Awe of Jesus' power in Luke 5 may have commandeered Peter's will, but awe of Jesus' mercy in John 21 captured his heart.

Here's my question: Has that change happened to your heart? Here's your test: **When you've messed up, when you've failed**, what does your heart tend to do--to run from Jesus or toward him? **Many of you feel, instinctively, that when God sees you, he recoils from you.** Or like he is waiting on you to prove yourself. Or that he's barely tolerating you, or he feels a low-grade disappointment. You sense him looking at you with a slight shake in his head or that disgust I had for the worm. **I'm here to tell you that this is not what he feels.** What he feels is tenderness. Even when you failed him.

What a friend, we have in Jesus! Oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything (the good and bad, our failures and embarrassments) to him in prayer.

II. A commitment to multiply (5:10)

10 "Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people."

Jesus not only commanded Peter to follow, he commanded him to go. Around the Summit we say that Jesus is like a spiritual tornado: he never pulls you in without also hurling you back out.

If you know Jesus, he has a plan for you. To take whatever nets you have in life and use them for eternal purposes.

What do you think the purpose of your life is? To make lots of money? To retire wealthy? To have kids and play with your grandkids and leave them some money? **Jesus intends for you to impact eternity.** He wants to take the net you've been fishing with and fill it with things of eternal value.

You say, "Well, how could I do that? I've not been to seminary, I'm not a pastor." Neither was Peter. But Peter was simply willing to follow Jesus, and learn from him.

All Jesus wants from you is your willingness to follow him! We say, he doesn't need your ability, he needs your availability. Here's how Jesus explained it a few chapters later in Luke. He says that when we're in a moment where we need to testify: "Don't worry in that moment about what you should say... for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what must be said." (Luke 12:11-12)

The lesson God has taught me over and over in life is that if I will be willing to obey, he'll do the impossible through me.

Story: I was taking an early morning flight somewhere and when I went into the gate area, I saw a girl reading an atheist book, so I did what I do. I asked her what she was looking for. I told her I was a Christian, to which she responded that she was not a fan of organized religion, and then she launched into a 5-minute tirade

about how bad megachurches were, at which point I thoroughly hid my identity. We didn't talk that long before the gate agent called us. She ended up sitting a few rows behind me on the plane. I didn't know this part of the story until later, but she said I struck up a convo with the guy next to me and shared Christ with him the whole way to ATL. She was kind of annoyed, but said he ended up listening. She told me later, "You don't have an inside voice, you know that?" Well, we get to ATL... Let me let her tell you the rest of the story, and then I'll come back. [VIDEO](#)

First I heard this story was when she stood in my kitchen because she was my daughter's small group leader. That's not anything extraordinary, it's just obeying the Holy Spirit.

Which leads me to the last quality of a disciple:

III. Total Surrender

11 Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed him.

This is a recurring theme in Luke, and I won't spend long on it because we just covered it a few weeks ago—but the requirement to be used by Jesus—the requirement to be a follower of Jesus—is total surrender. You have to let it all go. And that's where many of you falter. You are religious. You try to do the right thing. Religion is important to you. But have you ever taken your hands fully off your life and just said, "Jesus, it's all yours!"

Let this NET represent your life. Have you ever spread it out before God and said, "God, let this represent my talents, my dreams, my hopes, my decisions. What do YOU want from them? I'm putting it here on the ground before you. Fill it with what you want."

I promise you what he will fill it with will be things of eternal significance. Isn't that what you want from life? A life that matters? A life that makes a difference? There's more to life than making money, having kids, and retiring with a beach house.

That's a bold move, I know. But think of it in light of what we've learned today. If you've seen how tender and trustworthy Jesus is, why would you not trust him with your life?

- Why would you trust Jesus to save your soul but not take care of your needs? Why would you think he'd be loving enough to die for your sins and not loving enough guide you into green pastures of peace and beside still waters of fulfillment?
- This weekend, why not 'let your nets down' as an act of surrender? Take your net here, and say, "Jesus, you put into this what you want--into my schedule, my finances, my heart. Here, it's yours, everything." Are you ready?

Here's what's more. This week, if we have your email or mailing address, you are going to get a card that asks you if you will commit to these 5 identities. This isn't for you to check a few boxes for you to fill out so you can feel good about yourself. It's about renewing a commitment not just to be a spectator, but an actual follower of Jesus.

You can turn it in any time between now and February 27th, but on the weekend of the 27th, we are going to give you a chance to do it together.