

THE LORD'S SERMONS

Sermon 30

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Rich Catch

Luke V, 1-11: "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesareth, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people from the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon. Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, o Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

(April 1, 1872)

This chapter does not deal with parables and allegories that conceal a great deal of spiritual meaning. Here Luke tells you how one of My keenest disciples was won, namely Peter, formerly called Simon, as well as his partners James and John, sons of Zebedee. Luke tells you that I won the fisherman Simon by showing him that he who has a firm faith in Me is never disappointed, provided I regard his aspirations as justified and good in the interests of his spiritual progress.

The fact that Simon did let down his nets although he was convinced that it would be in vain, and the rich catch, have a twofold significance. Firstly, it proved to the fisherman that My power surpasses the governing circumstances and, secondly, it showed him that his faith in Me did not remain unrewarded. As Peter recognized the difference between Me and him, he exclaimed: "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" - Whereupon I, well aware of what his future calling would be, replied: "Fear not; for from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

There was a good spiritual reason why I chose almost all My disciples from the fishermen's trade. Their work on the flexible element of water and the dangers connected with it, bound them more to a divine, providential teaching, so that they were more religious, more devout and, thanks to their staple diet of fish, more peace-loving than other, meat-eating people.

I usually arranged circumstances in such a way that they came to Me of their own accord and followed Me unaware of My intention or My influence. This was the case here, too. I wanted to move My disciples' hearts through a miracle - by your standards- and encourage them to that important step, to leave everything behind and follow Me, which was not so easy as you may think. I had to insist on this condition, for in those times, and considering the future teaching ministry of My disciples, it was impossible to follow Me and at the same time belong to the world and to one's family.

Nowadays, I no longer need to impose such hard conditions on My followers, because things have changed; and if I were to demand this, the number of My followers would be extremely small. For in view of the comfortable life in the family and the homes to which people are used from their childhood, most of those who now show so much enthusiasm for My teaching would find it impossible to leave everything and follow Me, as My disciples once did.

Also among you, who imagine yourselves full of enthusiasm for Me and My teaching, there are only a few who would have the strength of character to take this step out of love for Me, even if they had Me living and working in their midst as was the case with My disciples. I am now not in need of such means and have other ways of achieving My purpose.

Today I expect you, and all who want to follow Me, to have the qualities of Peter, namely, his absolute faith in Me and his clear recognition of his own unworthiness. Because he considered himself unworthy of staying and living in My presence, this voluntary humiliation before Me turned the fisherman Simon into the rock "Peter", on which I intended to build My church, indestructible by heaven or earth. His firm trust in Me, already at our first encounter, kept growing and became a rock of faith.

My object in choosing this text for you and all believing mankind is to draw your attention to this man whom you should follow before all else.

John, as love personified, is also a guiding-star of foremost magnitude in the spiritual sky. But in order to become like him and be called "My favourite" as he was, you have first to go through the school of Peter, which for you is the world with its temptations.

Amid the snags of the world where various circumstances and events make you regard that as good, pleasant and particularly important which glitters on the outside, but lacks constancy and holds decay, - especially amid such temptations - you must first strengthen your faith and trust. There in particular you can realize the brittleness and weakness of your moral strength. It is in the bustle of life that you must always be aware of these two factors: My

omnipotence and your impotence. In no other way can you attain the inner peace of John who felt for Me nothing but love and a deep, childlike devotion.

Such tender emotions, such surrendering into My hands and living solely for the spiritual is not easy to achieve for men, even My followers, under the circumstances ruling in the world today because the decline of the world and its influence on the spiritual life of men is too powerful for anybody to free himself from it completely.

Therefore, it is your duty and that of My present and future adherents and followers first of all - like Peter - to make your inner spiritual self trust in Me with the firm faith that I am not going to forsake anybody, however pressing the circumstances that appear to lead onto other paths rather than to Me.

That which I am spiritually as the Son and the Father, as Wisdom and Love, Peter and John represented as My disciples. Peter represented the prudence that has to be observed in the world, John the ever-present kindness of the heart, notwithstanding all the falsehood in the world, which two qualities correspond to My wisdom and My love.

Thus you, too, should seek to comprehend spiritually the words I spoke to My disciples: "...Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves!" The spiritual analogy for the serpent's cunning is the worldly wisdom, and the artlessness of the peaceful dove denotes the virtue that neither thinks nor acts evil.

Thus you can see how everything in the words, works and miracles of your Jesus during the years of His ministry is of spiritual origin and has a spiritual significance. If you ponder the inner meaning of the events with the spiritual eye, the dense veil of incomprehensibility will gradually be raised, and where previously you had read only mystical words that did not appear to make sense, now the pure, bright truth will become evident. Just as nature becomes a living book to the person reborn, the spiritually advanced, the reading of which is not only of benefit for material life, but also supplies warnings and spiritual hints for the seeking soul, thus also the book I left to you, the Bible, is an everlasting fund wherein the sole, most glorious truths lie concealed, which I have reserved for those who have completed the school of Peter and arrived at the love of John.

Therefore, walking unhurt amid thorns, strive diligently after your goal, that at the end of all temptations and struggles consists in unlimited love which, figuratively in all created things and spiritually in My own presence, will richly reward the trust and faith you have shown during the course of your life.

Remember My warning to Peter prior to My capture: "The cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me", reminding him of his weak human nature, to which he once confessed, when in the ship he exclaimed: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" In the garden at the Mount of Olives he showed himself strong, lashed out with the sword and was full of

faith and trust, but soon afterwards - so much for human nature - he denied Me three times out of fear .

Therefore, you too should not imagine yourselves to be already the chosen, the infallible! Trust Me, not your own strength; for often a slight spiritual gust of wind is sufficient to make the entire edifice of spiritual self-assurance and moral strength collapse like a house of cards at the hands of children. Then you will have learned, as Peter did in My presence, that nothing can be achieved without Me, but *with* Me everything.

Thus also this text, which started with a rich catch, shall be concluded with this important thought: If you -like Simon -are destined to catch not fish, but people in My net of faith, you have to start with yourselves and always keep in mind that noble deeds, and not words, will deliver your fellowmen, your brothers and sisters, into My hands.

However, before this becomes possible, you must possess the wisdom of Peter and after that the love of John in your heart, and always keep in mind your own weakness and My strength. Thus you can carry out My will regarding yourselves as well as others, and you will never lack My blessing.

Amen.

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