Text: Luke 5:1-11

**Introduction**

What I want to talk about today usually goes by the word discipleship. Although that is a very church-y word. And I fear it has become too much so. The word disciple in its basic meaning is one who is learning. All rabbis – teachers – had disciples – learners. And those learning could be from a wide variety. And by variety I mean different places and ways that they would be learning or following their teacher. From full time partners in the teaching enterprise to those who might just have been kicking the tires on the teaching. But even that statement is just too linear. Because the teaching of a rabbi – and Jesus is not just a rabbi, but he is never less than a teacher – the teaching of a rabbi is not just head knowledge. The teaching of a rabbi is about life. How do we live?

So when we read about the disciples in the gospels we have to understand them in a couple of ways. These are the people who will become the apostles. Those with a direct calling to go and preach the good news of the Kingdom. They are also types of the people of God. So there is a specific way in which Simon is called to learn to be a fisher of men. But that call is not limited to an ordained ministry. This work of discipleship is something for the people of God.

**Text**

And I want start by recognizing something unique in Luke’s account. The way that Matthew and Mark relate the calling of the disciples, the emphasis is upon the immediacy. There is a the moment of epiphany. Jesus is walking along the shores, sees Simon – eventually called Peter, can says follow me. Simon drops his nets and follows. We are left reading them with this slightly miraculous mystical sense of the call of Jesus. That is happens in a moment. Is dramatic. Maybe comes out of nowhere. Which of course is exactly not the story of how most of us began our disciple walk. Most of us were baptized when we couldn’t remember it. Absorbed the faith – it’s teachings and rhythms - from our parents. Most of us came to the faith over time. We might have had mountaintop experiences, but not necessarily that dramatic moment. And it didn’t come out of nowhere, but we learned, we were discipled, by family – both blood and church. Luke still includes that final call, but he focuses a lot more on what leads up to that moment.

Starting in last week’s gospel, we need to recognize that Peter knew Jesus for some length of time. They probably met at the Synagogue of Capernaum. He was probably in the congregation that “was amazed at his teaching.” And why I say that is because when Jesus leaves that synagogue he goes to Simon’s house. And while at Simon’s house, he heals Simon’s mother-in-law. So Simon has heard Jesus teaching, he’s seen it’s power in the casting out of demons, he’s been personally affected in the healing of his mother-in-law, and then he’s seen how this Rabbi Jesus acts when the entire town comes to his door seeking healing. And then when it was day how Jesus would decide on the priority of preaching the Kingdom in other towns. Peter witnesses all of this first. A bit more like our story.

And all the while this is happening – and it could have been longer that you might think – Luke introduces our reading today with “on one occasion.” – so Jesus has been teaching and healing long enough to have separate occasions as well has gathering crowds. And it just so happens that this crowd is big enough that they were pressing in on him that maybe there was some fear he’d be pushed into the sea. But one of the fishermen that are back on shore after a fruitless night is Simon. So Jesus negotiates a bit with him and Simon lets Jesus use his boat as his pulpit. “He sat down and taught the people from the boat.”

“But when he finished speaking” the payment is due. So Jesus tells Simon, “put out into the deep and let down your nets.” Your payment for the use of the boat is there. And Simon’s answer is telling is two parts. First, he calls Jesus “master.” Simon recognizes the teaching authority of Jesus. There is a way that Simon has already become a disciple of Jesus. Second, Simon may not be so sure of everything Jesus says “we toiled all night and took nothing” – but he does it. “At your word I will let down the nets.”

**Christology**

When we are talking about discipleship, Luke’s picture of Simon rings true to me. And if you’ve had the more dramatic forms, I’m not dismissing those. There are a lot of good Road to Damascus disciples. Where the experience comes first, then Paul – blinded from the experience – has to take some time to absorb it after. But Simon heard the Kingdom proclaimed. Saw the good of the kingdom in both his community and his family. At some point intellectually consented that yes, this Jesus has authority over my life. Enough so that when Jesus says do something, even if it doesn’t make much sense, he would do it. And it is at that point that the something greater happens. Simon submits to the word of God, and so many fish jump in that the nets are breaking and they have to call over some other boats to share the full catch.

And it is at that point that Simon has his epiphany. This Jesus is not just another teacher. Jesus is never less than a teacher. But that Epiphany is when Simon is driven to his knees. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD.” This teacher and word that Simon had come to know and trust is not just another guru. This is The LORD. This is one worthy of worship – hence on his knees. Worthy of being called LORD.

In every discipleship walk there is this exact moment. Maybe it comes like Paul and shatters everything you thought. “Lord, who are you?” He’d ask. But it can also come like Simon. This one – this Word – this Jesus is not just a good teacher. Although he is that. This one is God. And somehow the creator of universe has made himself apparent in my life.

**Moral**

And when the creator of the universe – The LORD – has revealed himself in this way there are a couple of reactions.

The first is please leave. “Depart from me.” We are amazed at how we missed it before. How could you witness everything done on your doorstep and not know it. But now that we do, it is too much. Please let me go back to my ignorance. And we’ve probably all drifted away. Maybe run away.

And Simon’s second reaction is the counter to that, and always the response of faith – confession. “I am a sinful man.” The first action of faith, when you encounter the living God, is repentance. If you won’t go away. If you won’t leave me alone, forgive me.

**Eschatological**

And that opens the door to the entirety of discipleship. For Christ has not come to condemn, but to save. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid.”

We might be poor, miserable sinners, but Christ is only for sinners. And the same Word that Simon so trusted in temporal things – letting down his nets – we should trust in eternal things. “Do not be afraid.” The Father has loved you in his son. The Kingdom comes for you. This Kingdom has saved you. Has filled you boat with more than it can handle.

This Kingdom also comes with the call. You have met God. You have seen. Now go tell. “from now on you will be catching men.”

For Simon, that is rather more dramatic. “When they brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.” That’s what Simon knew his discipleship walk was. Most of ours are probably not that dramatic. But we have the same call. To live in our various vocations as witnesses to Christ.

The Kingdom has come to us. Not just in some mental understanding. But the Kingdom has come to us in its full authority. Your sins are forgiven. This is the body and blood. You are surrounded by witnesses. Fellow disciples. From now on you have a vocation. Witness to what you know. The goodness of the Lord.