



## **Luke 5:1-16**

### **“How Jesus Operated”**

July 7, 2103  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Pastor Phil Thrailkill  
Main Street UMC  
211 North Main St.  
Greenwood, SC 29646

Church Office: 864-229-7551  
Church Website with sermon manuscripts: [www.msumc1.org](http://www.msumc1.org)  
Email: [PThrailkil@aol.com](mailto:PThrailkil@aol.com)

## **“Following Christ from City Center”**

## Luke 5:1-16 "HOW JESUS OPERATED"

### 1) vv.1-11 THE MIRACULOUS CATCH & CALL OF SIMON/OTHERS (L Only, Jn. 21).

//Mk. 1:16-20, Jesus Preached Kingdom: Word/Deed

#### a) vv.1-3 Introduction: Fishermen And Their Boats Claimed By Jesus.

1. WORK SETTING

1 While the crowd (*ochlos*) pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Genessaret.

2 And he saw **two boats** by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked to be put out a little from **the land**. Mk. 4:1-2

And he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

4:15, 31, Teaching The Kingdom

Mighty Works As Basis Of Discipleship, Acts 9:35

#### b) vv.4-5 Dialog Between Jesus And Simon: Reluctant Obedience.

4 1 And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon,

Unusual Command, Counter-Intuitive

"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Prophecy: Word Of Knowledge

5 2 And Simon answered,

Will Peter Trust/Obey *The Boss*?

"Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets." 8:24,

Obedience "at your word" Miracles Of 4:31-36 In View

#### c) vv.6-7 Miraculous Catch Of Fish After Obedience.

Teamwork From The Start!

6 And when he had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish,

Acts 2:41 Catch, Financial \$

7 and as their nets were breaking,

Success Only At Jesus' Initiative

they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

Shared Riches

And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

Jesus In Boat, God's Power

Miracle: Day/Prediction/Great Shoal (3/4 Ton), 2 Sinking Boats

#### b') vv.8-10 Dialog Between Simon And Jesus: Simon Is Called.

Deep Unworthiness

8 2' But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,

8:37, Spirit's Light/Theophany

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." 5:32, Acts 15:11, Is. 6:5, Self-awareness: 4:34

(For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken;

and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, (10) who were partners with Simon.) 6:12-16

10 1' And Jesus said to Simon,

Jesus Seeks Sinners, Miracle As Catalyst

"Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching men *alive*." Acts 2:41, Commissioning/Rescue

10:2, Success → Jesus Needs Help, Eph. 4:11-12

#### a') v.11 Conclusion: Fishermen Claimed By Jesus And Boats Left Behind.

Left Blessing For Blesser

11 And when *they* had brought **their boats** to **land**, *they* left *everything* and followed him. Acts 1:21-22, Allegiance

### 2) vv.12-14 HEALING LEPER BY TOUCH/WORD IN RESPONSE TO PRAYER (// 4:38-39).

Additions to Mark 1:40-45 In *Italics* // Mt. 8:1-4

#### a) v.12a Condition: Man With Severe Leprosy.

2. PUBLIC SETTING: INDIVIDUAL

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man *full* of leprosy; ? 4:27, 43-44, Lev. 13-14, Heightened: *Full* //4:38

People Assumed Leprosy Was Sin-Related

#### b) v.12b Leper Speaks To Jesus In Posture And Prayer.

Prostration, 5:8 Above

and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, Cut Off From Community: Walking Corpse

"LORD, if you will, you can make me clean." Ritual Purity, Submission To Sovereign, Assumes Power

Wis. 12:18, Only God Heals Leprosy, Num. 5:2-3, 12:13, 2 Kgs. 5:7

#### b') v.13 Jesus Touches And Speaks To Leper A Prayer Of Command.

13 And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will, be clean." Powerful Gesture: Welcome

Jesus For Outcasts, Origen *Against Celsus* 3.59ff.

#### a') v.14 Cure: Man Without Leprosy And Public Validation.

Social Limbo Addressed

14 And immediately the leprosy left him. 4:35, 41; 2 Kgs. 5:7, Shame Removed, Creative Miracle Of Holy Spirit

And he charged him *to tell* no one; but "go *and* show yourself to the priest, Week-long, Post-Healing Instruction

and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, as a proof to the people." Leviticus 13:49

### 3) v.15 MASS HEALINGS (// 4:37, 40-41). 4:14, Hearing: Truth Encounter, Healing: Power Encounter

Unlike Ancient Physicians, Jesus Open To Outcasts, Not Only Elites

15 a *But so much more the report* (word) *went abroad* concerning him, 4:14, 3. PUBLIC SETTING: MASSES

b and great multitudes (*ochlos*) gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities.

### 4) v.16 WITHDRAWAL FOR PRAYER (// 4:42-44)

3:21-22, 6:12, Jesus Re-Filled, Directed

Jesus Is Found In Fellowship With Sinners, In Prayer With God

16 c *But he* (often) *withdrew* to the wilderness (i.e. desert) and prayed.

9:10, 4. RETREAT SETTING

**A Brief Treatment Of Luke 5:1-16**

This is the second of two parallel panels (A. 4:31-44 // B. 5:1-16) edited by Luke from Mark and his own source (L) to demonstrate the early ministry of Jesus (Appendix: 16). The shared pattern consists of five parts: 1) setting of preaching/teaching, 2) Ministry to an individual, 3) Ministry to second person, 4) Ministry to crowds, 5) Retreat. Each contains a notice how the news spread (4:37 // 5:15a) and a Petrine tradition (healing mother in law, Peter’s call). When read together they demonstrate the comprehensive power of Jesus as God’s agent in the power of the Spirit. He preaches the kingdom, frees demoniacs, banishes diseases, draws crowds, heals all, has power over nature, and calls disciples as trainees. After each period of engagement, Jesus pulls away in solitude. This is what the kingdom looks like at ground level. It is truth encounter and power encounter, lecture plus lab. Evil is expelled, sin forgiven, people restored. God’s love is on display. The inclusion for the larger unit are the words *crowd/ multitude* and *to hear* (v.1 // v.15) and the contrasting settings of *the lake of Genessaret* and *the wilderness* (v.1 // v.16).

The surface structure of the first thought unit is a 5:1 concentric pattern (a-b-c-b’-a’) with the miraculous catch of fish at the center. On either side (b/b’) are dialogues between Peter and Jesus, and in the outer frames (a/a’) references to *boats* and *land*. The literary type is a complex commissioning story which includes miraculous knowledge by Jesus, a theophany and humble response, a call to follow. It is the functional, though expanded, equivalent of Mk. 1:16-20, minus Andrew. Jesus disrupts life and demands allegiance. He is a compelling presence who calls men and women to himself, “Follow me....”

By placing the call of the disciples after the launch of Jesus’ ministry, Luke adds a measure of plausibility. Though brief in time, Peter has already had exposure to Jesus in the synagogue exorcism (4:31-37), in the healing of his wife’s mother (4:38-39), in mass healings (4:40-41), and now an early morning teaching (5:1). After a night with no catch, Peter and friends are prepping for the next night. Needing a secure place from which to teach, Jesus requisitions Peter’s boat, and he consents. A second obedience, though not without protest, is his willingness to *put out into the deep* and *let down the nets*. The load of fish threatens to swamp the boats. This is a manifestation of divine presence to which Peter makes a physical and verbal act of humility. Jesus speaks to his fear and announces a turning point. From this point on Peter will not be catching fish to kill them but catching people to give them new life. In a third act of obedience, Peter- and two friends, walk away from their former lives to join the school of Jesus. Peter has gathered knowledge of Jesus in multiple settings and demonstrates a desire to obey. Good soil.

The phrase *While he was in one of the cities* (cf. 4:42b) shows that Jesus is true to his kingdom calling and will not be limited by any single town. He takes the kingdom show on the road, and along the way people cross his path. The healing/cleansing of the leper is a 4:2 concentric pattern or chiasm (a-b-b’-a’) that evinces the classic parts of a miracle story: 1) setting, 2) problem, 3) cure, 4) evidence of healing. For the word *leprosy* we should substitute *scaly skin disease*. Such conditions are regulated in the purity code in Lev. 13-14, were thought to be punishment for sin, and led to near total isolation because to touch such a one- or what they touched- was to contract ritual impurity. Lepers were the living dead. The leper knows from reports that Jesus has power but questions his willingness. With a surprising touch and brief word, “I will, be clean,” Jesus publicly demonstrates compassion. The leprosy goes, and the man is sent to the priestly authority so he can not only be physically certified but restored to full social integration in family, village, synagogue, and temple. Healing is multi-level. As in the first panel (4:31-44), individual healings lead to mass opportunities, and Jesus does not disappoint. He then needs refilling (5:16).

## HOW JESUS OPERATED

*“And Jesus said to Simon,  
‘Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching men alive.’”*

In Christ’s presence fear goes and we are given a stake in his work.

### LUKE 5 : 1 0 b

**W**e are in the midst of a long trek through Luke’s biography of Jesus and not skipping any of the terrain,<sup>1</sup> the goal being that we walk the trails and pay attention to the details of the most remarkable life ever lived, the one we claim to know and follow even today. As I regularly say of myself and any church I serve, “There’s nothing wrong with me or you that more of Jesus won’t cure!” And if, as our new mission statement states, we are indeed *Following Christ from City-Center*, we need to know who we’re following, not some Jesus of our imagination but the real man, the one remembered by his first followers who preserved the stories of his life.

Our best guess is that Luke was a Greek speaking physician from Antioch who also wrote Acts- the first book of church history- and was a missionary companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke’s writings occupy about 25 percent of the New Testament, so his place is prominent. None of the four gospels originally had names attached.<sup>2</sup> You didn’t need to because the hearers knew the authors. Only in the second century do we find *according to Luke* attached to what became the third gospel in the New Testament list: Matthew, Mark, *Luke*. The early church fathers agree he was the physician and companion of Paul referred to in Colossians 4:14, “Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.”

---

<sup>1</sup> On the reliability of the gospels as ancient biographies, see Paul Eddy, Greg Boyd, *The Jesus Legend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), Chapter 8, “The Genre and Nature of the Canonical Gospels....” 309-362.

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels And The One Gospel Of Jesus Christ* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2000), Chapter 1, “The Authors of the Four Gospels,” 8-33.

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 5**

Our patron was not a first generation but a second or even third generation convert who- while he did not know Jesus in the flesh- undertook research with those who did.<sup>3</sup> His writing demonstrates he was familiar with geography, history and biography, and sought to reframe the story of Jesus for a Gentile audience. Luke was not only a physician but a literary figure who had come to faith in Christ. He took the earlier Gospel of Mark along with other sources and added to it them the birth narratives we love as well as six miracles and eighteen parable not found in the other gospels plus the whole of the Book of Acts. So vivid is his portrait of the Holy Family in the birth stories that the Eastern Orthodox Churches have taken Luke as the founder of the school of holy painting known as *iconography*. Legend is his was the first icon of Mary. What he painted in words, others portrayed in holy art. Thus Luke is the patron saint not only of physicians and surgeons- his own vocation, but of artists as well.<sup>4</sup> Luke was an intelligent Christian, a man of learning and faith and missions who believed Jesus was God the Son, Messiah of the Jews and Savior of the world. Luke is our teacher, and we are his students in how to follow the Lord.

Our best traditions are that Luke died at age 84 and was buried at Thebes in Greece where his tomb is venerated as a pilgrimage site. Since I have spend years studying his work, it's on my bucket list to make a pilgrimage to Thebes. The lead coffin was transferred to Constantinople in A.D. 338 and later taken west to Padua in Italy, likely during the Crusades. In 1354 the skull was separated from the body at the order of Emperor Charles IV and is now housed in Prague. It was last opened in 1562, but in 1992 the bishop of Padua received a request from a Greek bishop that a portion of the bones be returned to Thebes as a courtesy. They wanted a piece.

In 1998, under the supervision of an Italian pathologist and a population geneticist, tests began on DNA taken from a tooth found in the coffin. The bones are of a Syrian male who died between A.D. 72 and A.D. 416. That is consistent with what we know of Luke but not proof. When the head was brought from Prague, it fit perfectly the top neck bone, as did the tooth when fitted into the right jaw. A rib from near the heart was then returned to the church in Thebes.<sup>5</sup> Now since we Protestants-

---

<sup>3</sup> 1:1-4.

<sup>4</sup> "Saint Luke," [www.orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle\\_Luke](http://www.orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle_Luke).

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Wade, "Body of St. Luke Gains Credibility," October 16, 2001, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). For the scientific paper, "Genetic characterization of the body attributed to the evangelist Luke," see [www.pnas.org/content/98/23/13460.full](http://www.pnas.org/content/98/23/13460.full).

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 6**

with a few exceptions- have abandoned the veneration of holy relics, it does not much matter whose the bones are since we have Luke’s writings, but could it be that our author now lies in three pieces: in Prague, Padua, and Thebes? As an aside, it’s also highly probable that the bones of St. Peter are under the altar at the Vatican and that the bones of Paul have been recently verified in a Roman Church that bears his name.<sup>6</sup> Our forebears were buried somewhere; the sites were known and honored early as places of pilgrimage; many had churches built over their graves, so why be surprised? Our faith is not about myths but real people, only one of which has so far had his flesh and bones transformed by resurrection, and that’s Jesus. Luke and the rest of our dead still waiting for that great event at the end of the age, when- as the spiritual sings, “Dem bones gonna rise agin. Gonna hear the word of the Lord.”

**TURNING TO THE TEXT**

**5:1-11 The Call And Commissioning Of The First Disciples.**

It’s shortly after sunrise; such a crowd gathers they press Jesus back to the lake.<sup>7</sup> He’s opening Scripture in light of the kingdom of his Father, and they are eager listeners. Jesus was a doer of mighty deeds, but first a teacher, and his deeds were like lab to lecture. First tell the kingdom in stories, then show it in deeds so they illumine one another.<sup>8</sup> “This is who God is,” says Jesus, “and this is what happens when God shows up as ground level. I like what an English priest has written, that with Jesus “his mind-blowing teaching went a body-healing touch.”<sup>9</sup>

Note the order of the summary in verse 15, “...and great multitudes gathered 1) to hear and 2) to be healed of their infirmities.” A deep hunger in the people is met by a supply from the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit. A *truth*

---

<sup>6</sup> “Pope: Basilica bones belong to apostle St. Paul,” [www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/06/29/vatican.st.paul.bones/index](http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/06/29/vatican.st.paul.bones/index).

<sup>7</sup> David Bivin, “The Miraculous Catch,” *Jerusalem Perspective*, March/April 1992, 8.

<sup>8</sup> An accessible treatment of Jesus’ kingdom ministry is Ben Witherington, *Imminent Domain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009)

<sup>9</sup> Morris Maddocks, *Twenty Questions About Healing* (London: SPCK, 1988), ix.

---

**Luke 5:1-16** ..... 7

*encounter* with God’s word precedes a *power encounter* with God’s person.<sup>10</sup> In our day we have much Word and little power, lots of sermons and few labs. We’ve forgotten how to live interactively with the Holy Spirit for the benefit of others. It’s too risky for timid souls. But things are starting to happen again. I can feel the Spirit’s breezes blowing through my thinning hair here at Main Street.

That Jesus was a teacher says something about him and his audience. He believed they could receive insight and be strengthened in faith as the Holy Spirit took his prophetic words and shot them like arrows into the peoples’ minds and hearts. A church that is not a *teaching plus action* church has cut apart what Jesus held together. All teaching and we puff up, all action and we burn out, but with the two together we grow strong; what we take in through teaching, we work out in action. Ignorance and boredom are a deadly combination.

Jesus and Peter had different experiences that night. Jesus snoozed; Peter sweated. Jesus let go of a day’s labor; Peter embraced it. Jesus was refreshed; Peter worked by torch light all night with his partners for what? Nothing. The nets were empty. Not until transparent nylon nets were introduced in the 1950's could fishing be done during daylight in the Sea of Galilee. The water’s just too clear; fish spot the linen nets and avoid them. Linen nets rot if not carefully washed and hung to dry. It’s pure drudgery if there’s no catch. No bills were paid that day. As Peter worked on the shore, a crowd presses in. “Hey, Peter,” said Jesus, “I need help. Lend me your boat.” Every minute kept Peter from finishing the day’s work.<sup>11</sup> It was a test of character, but someone was fishing for Peter.

There are times when emotions support our faith and carry us along; there are also times when faith is pure obedience against the grain. As the crowd scatters and Peter’s about to head home, Jesus places yet another claim on his time and equipment, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Jesus the woodworker is now telling fisherman Peter about his own business. Men don’t like that!

Remember that Jesus is always carrying on two conversations: one with the

---

<sup>10</sup> For a pastoral treatment of this pattern, see Bill Hull, *Straight Talk On Spiritual Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> In Luke’s telling, the signs of 4:31-44 precedes Peter’s call. In Mark 1:16-20 the call of Peter does not include prior knowledge of Jesus; in Luke it does. Having healed Peter’s mother in law, Jesus can now ask for a favor with the boat!

---

**Luke 5:1-16** ..... 8

Father through the Spirit, one with the people around him.<sup>12</sup> It's where the insight and power came from. Jesus received a revelation and passed it on to Peter, "Launch out into the deep for a catch." Jesus acted in faith by speaking to Peter; Peter acted in faith by obeying, even though he complained a bit, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But *at your word* I will let down the nets." Why did he say *at your word*? Because Peter had recently seen just how potent Jesus' word was in the Capernaum synagogue with the demoniac, at home with the healing of his mother-in-law, and with the crowds in his courtyard,<sup>13</sup> so he obeys. It's tired faith, complaining faith, but still faith based on true evidence, so Peter obeys for a second time.

The Spirit's gift of knowledge is a practical gift we all need to understand. It's form of divine revelation in which you know something because God told you. At first it seems dramatic- and is, but after a while you understand this is standard equipment which we've recently ignored in our bias against a truly involved God. Plumbers have wrenches, dentists drills, and believers have spiritual gifts. The word of knowledge or wisdom may come as an intruding idea that disrupts your train of thought so that you ask yourself, "Where did that come from?" Or maybe as a holy hunch, "I wonder if..." Or a picture on the mind's eye, "What's that?"<sup>14</sup> It's easily missed. God rarely shouts and often whispers. This happens to all Christians; only some understand and recognize what it is. Perhaps Jesus heard something like this from the Father- and here I speculate:

"I'm about to pay Peter back for the borrowed boat. What I withheld during the night, I will now far exceed. Tell him to launch out into the deep for a catch. We're going to catch more than fish this morning."

Those skeptics who reduce this miracle to a natural occurrence where Jesus was a little higher than Peter and saw the shoal of fish miss the point and give away their naturalistic bias. This is not a sleight-of-hand but divine revelation. Jesus heard and spoke to Peter; after a mild complaint, Peter obeyed. The place where Peter was expert was about to be interrupted. Miracle can be a catalyst to faith, but miracles do

---

<sup>12</sup> For insight into this dynamic, see John 5:19-30 where Jesus is a mimic.

<sup>13</sup> 4:31-44.

<sup>14</sup> See Bill Johnson, Randy Clark, *The Essential Guide to Healing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), Chapter 10, "Words of Knowledge for Healing," 191-212.

---



**Luke 5:1-16** ..... 9

not coerce faith.<sup>15</sup> At the human level Jesus knows less about fishing than Peter, but he has a word from the One who created fish. Why should we be surprised if nature bends to the touch of the God who knows it intimately?

Picture the sights and sounds at the center of the story. Boats stop dead in the water. Linen sinews stretch and begin to pop. Help is called for. Two twenty-foot-long boats with four foot gunnels fill with shining, flopping fish. How many miracles have been missed because some believer refused to obey an illogical command? No fish are caught during daylight; that was Peter's seasoned judgment. But when he moved beyond limited experience into the realm of trust based on a prophetic word of Jesus, something happened. Peter was learning to trust Jesus and his words which were grounded in the Living God. He failed; Jesus succeeded: lesson one. If you want to catch fish or people, listen to Jesus! He's really good at both.

Jesus did not give Peter silver coins; he gave him fish to be sold for coins. Mendel Nun, an expert on Galilee fisheries, estimates it was two week's work compressed into one haul.<sup>16</sup> Fifteen hundred pounds of fish. Tiredness evaporates; adrenalin surges; Peter hit the jackpot. The one who is Lord over the demons and illness is also Lord over nature, even over the finances of those who obey him. Hello? What we need as we obey, he provides; what he doesn't provide as we obey, we don't need. And if we're not obeying, what does it matter? Lori and I see tithing as a visible reminder of our being in an ongoing partnership with God, and when we need something, it has a way of coming towards us. I like living this way.

Now where is Jesus? Where we left him, in the boat with Peter and the fish. I love it. It lets me know he's as comfortable in the banker's vault, in the farmer's field, in the surgeon's suite or the teacher's classroom as in the synagogue or alone at prayer. He knows both you and your business better than you do. Jesus is not particularly religious but claims the whole of life. Not just a Sunday but a Monday Jesus, a Lord for every day that ends in *Y*. Jesus smelled like fish until he took his next bath; the pungent smell of miracle was all over him. I love a Jesus who smells like sweat-and-fish, not this blow-dry-Mary-Kay-smelling Jesus that passes as sappy Christian art. Jesus was laughing. Fish flopping everywhere, and Peter about to have a mid-life career change. Fishing was a discipline and a duty, often a drudgery, occasionally a delight, but now Peter was about to discover that for which he was

---

<sup>15</sup> See Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 59-62 for a discussion of this issue.

<sup>16</sup> Bivin, "Miraculous Catch," 10.

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 10**

made. How many men and women work hard and long and never discover their destiny in Christ? Live for the weekend, dream of retirement, when all the while Jesus is walking into their workplace with a better deal.

Not all follow Christ the same way. Peter was called to change vocations: fisherman to apprentice, then apprentice to evangelist, finally evangelist to martyr. Jesus re-manufactured Peter several times. There are some jobs that can never become a calling because they're simply not good for people. If you are in one of those and have a troubled conscience, ask God for a move. You need a paycheck; you also need a life and a sense of holy zest about what you do. It may be your job is an honorable one but that your ministry is somewhere else, so when someone asks, "What do you do?" you answer, "My calling is youth ministry or music ministry or witnessing or service or prayer, but I earn a living at Self Hospital or Covidien or District 50." The call to follow Christ is a call to participate in his work.

Preachers sometimes give altar calls to come kneel and pray. That's OK. But the best are not accompanied by hymns and pleadings. They come as the Lord pushes someone to their knees with the weight of his mercy and blessing. One moment Peter was a successful fisherman, the next a man in agony. Light dawned; Peter saw through the circumstances to just who Jesus was, "Depart from me, *O Lord*, for I am a sinful man." Peter didn't read that confession off a page; it erupted out of his heart because of the raw illumination of divine revelation. Peter felt exposed.

Jesus is at once the most attractive and frightening man who ever lived. Holy love is terrifying and magnetic at the same time.<sup>17</sup> To do business with him is to be utterly exposed: the truth about God and the reality of me in close proximity. Peter sees himself, and it hurts. The crusty fisherman begs Jesus to get out of his boat, then get out of his life. "Depart from me, Lord; I don't like what I see." The power that touched others now touched him! Jesus has crawled inside Peter's defenses. Remember, it is not sin that disqualifies us from service, only its denial. Peter was a good guy: work all night, hold the boat for Jesus when tired, launch out against better judgment, then have Jesus wreck your life with a load of fish and a load of guilt and shame, "Get away from me." It was just too much for one day.

---

<sup>17</sup> The Latin is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which means *mystery that attracts and repels*; see Johan Cilliers, "Liturgical Perspectives on the Approach to God," [www.academic.sun.ac.za/tsv/Profiles/Profile\\_documents/Johan\\_Cilliers\\_MYSTERIUM\\_TREMENDUM\\_ET\\_FASCINANS.pdf](http://www.academic.sun.ac.za/tsv/Profiles/Profile_documents/Johan_Cilliers_MYSTERIUM_TREMENDUM_ET_FASCINANS.pdf).

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 11**

Jesus did not obey Simon and leave him alone; instead he gave a second command and prophecy, “Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be *netting people*.”<sup>18</sup> The crowds are growing; helpers are needed. Peter, his brother Andrew and their buddies James and John are the first four apprentices.<sup>19</sup> The story ends on a note of joyful sacrifice, “And when *they* brought their boats to land, *they left everything*-including three quarters of a ton of fish- and followed him.” For the farmer a tractor, for the business leader a briefcase, for the sportswoman a tennis racket; the nurse leaves a blood pressure cuff and a teacher their chalk. Is there anything you must empty your hands of to receive the destiny to which you are called? Jesus now has a few helpers for three years of training, eventually a dozen.<sup>20</sup> Peter went fishing and got hooked, as did his partners. I don’t preach this stuff to entertain; I preach Scripture to give the Holy Spirit raw materials to change lives, and that means me first! I am hungry for a change, and if that means exposure, so be it!

In his great book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis speaks plainly about the total claim Jesus make on a life. He writes:

“Christ says, ‘Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked- the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours.’”<sup>21</sup>

Peter and his friends James and John found this out. I warn you. Jesus knows your name, and he’s coming after you! You have the right to say *No*, but I do not recommend it. What you crave, which is *Life* with a *Capital L*, is found only in him.

---

<sup>18</sup> Luke Johnson’s felicitous and inclusive translation in *Luke: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 88.

<sup>19</sup> Mark 1:16-20.

<sup>20</sup> See 6:12-19 on the formation of the twelve.

<sup>21</sup> (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2001), 196-197.

---

**5:12-14 Healing A Leper.**

Jews don't touch lepers. They were ritually unclean, separated from the synagogue and temple by a strict code. A leper is a contaminated person, what many AID's sufferers must feel in our day as modern untouchables. To be labeled a *leper*, which means to have any one of a number of flaky, red, skin disorders- likely not modern leprosy or *Hansen's disease*- was to be permanently unclean. Special clothing was required; your presence had to be publicly announced.<sup>22</sup> Your touch rendered others ceremonially unclean, meaning they had to perform lengthy and expensive rituals before being restored. It was a living death.

But most cruelly of all, leprosy was commonly understood to be the direct judgment of God for heinous sin, often sexual in nature. Oozing sores and scaly skin were taken as an outward symbol of an inwardly diseased soul. It was proverbial that only God could heal a leper, and so when Jesus does so it raises the question of Messianic identity. They were scorned and believed God hated them too. Then Jesus came along and changed their world; he was the path to restoration. Love come near; loved touched them; love healed and restored and started a mass movement when the story got out along the grapevine.

That this man risked the crowds is a demonstration of his faith. He wanted to get near the man he's heard about, and you could see the crowds parting in fear and disgust. Like Peter, he fell down, only further than his knees; he fell on his face, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." It was a desperate act. Notice that Jesus did not draw the link between sin and disease. He claimed the man as a fellow Jew and pronounced on him the verdict of God, "And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will, be clean.'" The power of the Holy Spirit saturated the man's flesh, "And immediately the leprosy left him." What doctors do a patch at a time for burn victims, God did all at once. It was a creative miracle all could see so that every prejudice the crowds had about lepers was called into question. To say *those kind of people* is spiritually dangerous, because what do you do when God heals one of the people you despise?

\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus then sent the anonymous man to the local Jewish priest for three purposes:

---

<sup>22</sup> Leviticus 13-14.

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 13**

- 1) to certify the such so the man could officially rejoin his family, synagogue, and resume pilgrimages to Jerusalem;
- 2) as a sign of Jesus' commitment to God's law, and
- 3) as a witness that Messianic actions were being performed nearby.

The center of Jewish life is no longer a stationary temple and its management but a Jesus whose on the move and cannot be managed. What only God can do, that is what Jesus does because the Father, the Spirit, and the Son are- as we say- *in cahoots with one another*. His is not a defensive holiness of avoiding the unclean but an offensive holiness of going for the worst and the least and the lost. Outcasts are welcomed by Jesus into the people of God. They receive in their bodies a small preview of the resurrection, not the whole, but a good first dose.

In his book *Your Church Is Too Safe*- what a great title! Pastor Mark Buchanan shares the story of Russian priest, Father John Sergieff:

“John was a priest in Kronstadt, Russia in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Imperial Russia was decadent, the streets dangerous, rife with poverty and depravity..... Alcoholism was rampant. Prostitutes crowded the corners, thieves the alleys. There was no safe place, so most people who weren't part of that world didn't venture out into it. Most of the clergy, used to a life of privilege and status, used what waning powers they had to insulate themselves from the widespread peril and hardship.

Not so Father John. His daily practice was to don his robe and descend into the meanest part of the city. He'd walk among the addicts and the predators, the whores and the thieves, the orphans and the widows, and he did it with healing in his wings. He would find the most broken and dissolute man or woman he could track down, lying in a gutter or standing on a street corner. He'd then cup their chin in his large hand and lift their face so they were looking in his eyes. ‘This,’ he would say, meaning this way of life, this means of survival, this condition I found you in, ‘is beneath your dignity. You were created to house the glory of the living God.’ Father John was called the *Pastor of All Russia*. Everywhere he went, revival came with him.”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 88-89.

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 14**

Is this not what we are to do? Obey Jesus and fish for people. Those with boats and families and livelihoods and friends and community respect like Peter and his friends, and those have none of these. Why aren't we? We have to find out.

**5:15-16 Healing The Multitudes And Retreat.**

There are two things we all need. We need to hear and recognize the truth that comes from Jesus, and we need an experience of the power God's love, to know beyond doubt that God cares about us as a person, not just part of a larger whole. And when the crowds came to check Jesus out, they got both in large doses, verse 15, "But so much more the word went out concerning him, and great multitudes gathered *to hear and to be healed of their infirmities.*"

Unlike ancient physicians, Jesus did not charge a fee; it was all free because it was beyond cost. Some things you can't buy. And he did not prescribe a course of treatment for gradual improvement; his healings- from all I can gather- were immediate. Neither did he send folk off to healing shrines or the Jerusalem temple because he was the vertical contact point, the place where heaven with its resources and earth with its needs intersected.<sup>24</sup> In his presence, because of his cooperation with his Father above and the Spirit within, Jesus stood before hundreds of desperate, hurting, hopeless, tormented people knowing that God's Word in his teaching and God's power in his word and touch would carry the day and change everything. And he did it day after day after day, each time with a new audience.

A year and half ago I went on a dental mission trip to Honduras with my daughter Ellen. I did many jobs, but my main task was to pray with each patient, and this I did through a translator. With some I could not tell anything much happened beyond being loved and treated kindly. Lots of smiles and tears, but with several, and about three in the span of an hour, remarkable things happened, including one Mayan woman who walked up hobbling in chronic sciatic pain and left with none. When she said through the translator, "The pain, it's gone!" I was so surprised I called over a nurse practitioner to get her history and verify the report. Ten years of pain gone in five minutes. But at the end of six hours of praying, I was spent. It's draining to deal with people and their troubles up close, knowing you are not the answer. Imagine how tired Jesus got, even though he was the answer, and knew it! This explains verse

---

<sup>24</sup> On the contrast between Jesus and other ancient healers, see Andrew Dauntou-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 15.

---

**Luke 5:1-16 ..... 15**

16, “But he often withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.” Silence and solitude, reflection and thanksgiving, fresh insight and new orders. Jesus loves people, but he does not let them control him. His priority is elsewhere, and it is out of such retreats that he fills up for another outpouring of the power of holy love. S.D. Gordon wrote:

“How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only his regular habit, but his resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed, he prayed. When hard pressed by work, he prayed. When hungry for fellowship, he found it in prayer. He chose his associates and received his messages upon his knees. If tempted, he prayed. If criticized, he prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, he had recourse to his one unfailing habit of prayer. Prayer brought him unmeasured power at the beginning, and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer.”<sup>25</sup>

And then the next day he woke up and went at it again, day after day preaching the kingdom, calling disciples, interrupting lives, healing the sick, casting out devils, giving the broken world a glimpse of the holy and powerful love of God as an alternative form of government. It’s what he did every day for three years till the powers that be could stand it not longer! And then he did him in, or so they thought!

**CONCLUSION**

The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* contains a prayer to honor St. Luke on his feast day. Make it yours I read it aloud:

“Almighty God, who inspired your servant Luke the physician to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of your Son: Graciously continue in your Church this love and power to heal, to the praise and glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Amen.”

---

<sup>25</sup> S. D. Gordon, “Quiet Talks on Prayer.” *Christianity Today*, Vol. 30, no. 5.

---

LUKE 4:31-44, 5:1-16

TWO PANELS ON KINGDOM MINISTRY AND POWER EVANGELISM  
(Jesus' Typical Pattern Of Ministry: Tell-And-Show The Kingdom, Then Refill!)

//Mark 1:21-39

L (5:1-11), // Mk. 1:40-45,

**A. Luke 4:31-44 (Panel 1)**

**B. Luke 5:1-16 (Panel 2)**

**1. v.31a Setting: Synagogue preaching**

**1. v.1a Setting: Lakeside preaching**

“teaching,” “word”

“hear,” “word,” “and it happened”

**2. vv.31b-37 Teaching + Power**

**2. vv.1b-11 Teaching + Power**

Ministry to first individual  
Jesus has power over demons  
“astonished” (v.31b)

Ministry to first individual  
Jesus has power over nature, over sin/shame  
“astonished” (v.9)

v.37 Report spreads

(Petrine tradition: Commissioning story)

**3. vv.38-39 Healing Fever After Request**

**3. vv.12-14 Healing Leprosy After Request**

Ministry to second individual  
Extreme case: “*high* fever,” “left”  
“besought,” “immediately”  
(Petrine tradition: Family memory)

Ministry to second individual  
Extreme case: “*full* of leprosy,” “left”  
“besought,” “immediately,” “and it happened”  
“**cities**”

**4. vv.40-41 Mass Healings/Deliverances**

**4. v.15 Mass Healings of Afflictions**

Ministry to crowds  
“healed them all”

Ministry to crowds  
“healed of their infirmities”

v.15a Report spreads

**5. v.42 Jesus retreats for clarity**

**5. v.16 Jesus retreats for prayer.**

“departed and went to a desert place”  
“**cities**”

“withdrew to the wilderness and prayed”

**Summary:**

Out of Jesus' prayerful intimacy with the Father and Spirit as demonstrated in his retreats and prayer, the word of the kingdom overflowed in different settings (e.g. synagogue, home, public, outdoors), backed with divine power to restore people. Jesus brings the kingdom and its benefits to bear on God's people as a living preview of the total restoration of creation that remains future. The kingdom is already having effects on the present, broken world. *To hear* and *to heal* are watchwords for Jesus' style of lecture and lab, teach-and-then-experience style of ministry. People came for three basic reasons: they were curious, they were hurting, they needed hope, and Jesus was in a category by himself. He engaged in a strategic pattern of engagement for service and disengagement for prayer and renewal. He does what needs doing, then retreats for fresh vision. To live in his company as an apprentice is to learn these practices. He is found in prayer with God and in healing fellowship with sinners. Both matter; both continue.