



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Luke 5:1-14

“Catching Men of Alive, or the Draught of the Fishes”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Luke chapter 5, verses 1 through 11. This is the Lukan account of the miraculous draft of fishes. Now if you should be from Britain, this is the miraculous draught of fishes, but it is the same passage,

“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, (By the way this is another term for the Sea of Galilee. Luke uses this term. It is the same Sea of Galilee.) 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 out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, (Now I want you to notice that word.) 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 inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net began to brake. (Now I have added these words for his is the force of the imperfect tense in Greek at this point.) And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and

help them. (You see the corporation was in difficulty.) 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. (Now I want you to notice that word too.) For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught 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.”

May God bless this reading of his holy word to our understanding? Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father we come to Thee in the name which is above every name, the name of our Lord our master, our Savior and redeemer Jesus Christ. We thank Thee, Lord, that he is the one who was born in the manger in Bethlehem, who went about doing good, as the Apostle Peter has said, and then did the greatest good work of all in the gift of himself upon the cross at Calvary for our sins. And we thank Thee, Lord, that when upon that cross he cried out, “It is finished.” And we thank Thee, Lord, because he said, “It is finished.” We know that the work of redemption is accomplished. It has been done. There is therefore nothing left for us to do, but to bow in adoration before Thee, and accept him as our personal Savior.

The one provided by God to cover all of our sins, and we thank Thee, Lord, for the wonderful grace whereby we are able to stand in Thy presence this morning, justified freely by Thy grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And so, Lord, we want to express to Thee gratitude and devotion and thanksgiving. We thank Thee that salvation is the work of God and not man, and we thank Thee that Thou hast revealed this to us in the gracious operation of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And, Lord, we pray for this audience, which is gathered in Jesus' name this morning whether young, or old. May today through the teaching of the word of God through the prayers of the individuals, through the worship that arises from hearts present here, may his name be honored and glorified in our midst. For those, Lord, who do not know Thee, again we ask may this be the day of salvation for them. For those who do know Thee may today be a day in which they catch a new vision of Jesus Christ. And, Lord, we also pray for our country. We thank Thee for its leadership for we know, Lord, that Thou art in control of the nations of the world, and that no one sits in the place of authority apart from the express permission of our God, and so we pray for wisdom and guidance to given to our president, and those who are associated with him in the reigns of government. Bless this nation.

May oh God, the word of God continue to go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit. May oh God, there still be the work of the Spirit selecting and calling out those who are to become members of the genuine and true church, the body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And pray Lord too for those who have gone to far away places beyond our boarders to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Bless every genuine missionary of the church of Jesus Christ, and may their ministry today be fruitful in the Lord Jesus. We pray too, Lord, for those who are not with us, whether sick or vacationing, may the presence of our God be with them. And, Lord, especially for those who are sick we pray that Thou wilt lay Thy hand upon them within Thy will and restore them to health and strength and to the fellowship of the saints. We want to bless Thee for this privilege and pray that the love of Christ may flow through us through the indwelling spirit to every believer in the Lord Jesus. Enable us, oh God, to keep the new commandment, love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us. Now we commit the remainder of this service to Thee, the singing of the hymn the ministry of the Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] This morning we are turning to Luke chapter 5, and our subject,

“Catching Men Alive.” In the Christian life, there are of course a number of important spheres. Most of us who have been Christians for any length of time are familiar with these spheres of life. We of course are familiar with the fact that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we should live the kind of life that is not a dishonor to the one whom we adore our Lord Jesus. We are told frequently that our walk must be in harmony with our talk, that we should live a life that is a reflection of the fact that we have put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also told of course too that we should worship the Lord Jesus. Some of us think of worship as simply the expression of prayer or praise, and surely these activities do have a part in our worship.

Worship is essentially the recognition personally of the worthiness or worth ship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Christian who does not have a life of worship is generally a dry and barren kind of Christian. The Christian who has life of genuine worship is usually the kind of Christian that you like to be around, and so we as Christians know that our walk should be in harmony with what we say we ware, and we should have a personal devotion of life reflected in our worship of God through Jesus Christ, and I guess that almost all of us know that as believers there should be in our lives a witness for Jesus Christ.

Now one thing that learn as we read through the whole of word of God is that when a man comes to know God, whether in the Old Testament before the time our Lord Jesus, or in the New Testament after the Lord Jesus Christ has come the faith that he has and the life that it has brought him is the subject for personal witness and testimony.

Now, Luke chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 is one of these passages that very effectively centers our attention upon the witness of a believer. All of these things, our worship our walk our witness needs constant emphasis. And here we are going to see through this incident that emphasis rests upon the last the witness of the believer. You

remember the Lord Jesus said to the apostles when he left them that they were to be witnesses unto him, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria unto the uttermost part of heart, witnesses unto him.

Now mind you Christians, you've been mingling with Christians, and you've been listening to the many things that Christians say, and you know frequently the many things that Christians say are not necessarily in the Bible even though they have the honor and authority of hundreds of years of usage. Do you know that we are not supposed to be witnesses unto our church? We are not supposed to be witnesses to the preacher in our church. We are not to be witnesses unto the believers in our church.

Now we of course know that unbelievers come into our meetings constantly and say, “Well that's a church I don't want to be in. There are so many hypocrites there.” We don't witness to the hypocrites who sit in the congregation, and furthermore I can't think of a better place for hypocrites to be than under the sound of the word of God that is really preached if you want to discuss it, but the point I am making is this that we are not witnesses to the members of our church. We don't say when you come in Believer's Chapel, “Behold us.” We don't say, “Behold the elders.” We don't say, “Behold the deacons.” We don't say, “Behold the congregation.” We say, “Behold Jesus Christ.” You see we are witnesses unto him, unto him.

Now it is important for us to keep that in mind. We are to be witnesses unto him. Now in this particular passage in Luke chapter 5, I think we find this illustrated in a very wonderful way. There are other illustrations of it in this book.

Now I hesitate to speak on Luke as you know, because we've been having Dr. Towson over from time to time, and he likes to specialize in the Book of Luke because he's been teaching the Book of Luke at the seminary, and furthermore whenever we have Bill Wallatarsky teach the adult class he turns to the Gospel of Luke because he too has been studying Luke. And I think that between them they think that they wrote this book.

[Laughter] But nevertheless we are going to look at Luke chapter 5, and I say that it's not only in this chapter that we find this emphasis on witnessing.

Do you remember in the 7th chapter when the Lord Jesus met that group of people who were coming out from the city of Nain? There was the widow, and there was her only son who had just died, and the Lord Jesus with some of the disciples went up to the bier in which the body was contained, stopped the crowd, and then he spoke and told that young man to arise from the dead. And the text says, “He arose from the dead and he began to speak.” As if to suggest the first activity that man should do who has been brought to life through the gospel of Lord Jesus is to use his mouth in testimony to that which Christ has done for him.

So Luke chapter 5 the miraculous draught of fishes. It must have been a wonderful day when that crowd gathered around that little Sea of Galilee had the opportunity to hear the Lord Jesus Christ preach. Here Luke says, that the people pressed upon him so much that seeing three men sitting by washing their nets after fishing all night, and a couple of boats by the sea shore he went up to Simon, who he knew, apparently he had already called Simon to be a disciple for he is called that, and he asked Simon if he might not have the use of his boat for a little while, and so the Lord Jesus entered into the boat and the crowd pressed down around the Sea of Galilee. You know that's just a little bit of water, about 13 miles long and about seven or eight miles wide, and around that little lake there are just small hills, and so when a person sat in a boat a few feet out from the water there was natural amphitheater, and their voices would carry well over the water, and so it was a perfect place to preach, and the Lord Jesus sat in the boat and he taught them, the men who were washing their nets as well as the crowd who had pressed down upon them.

There they were with the fish by the side of the boat, the crowd on the seashore, and the Lord Jesus on the boat. This is called the Sea of Gennesaret. Do you know it was also called the Sea of Life because just to the south of course was the Dead Sea, and

the Dead Sea was called the Sea of the Dead and the Lake of Galilee was called the Sea of Life, and how often it did become the Sea of Life as they listened to the Lord Jesus. Here you know in that little lake there must have been many fishes because whenever you turn the pages of the New Testament you read about fishing don't you?

Now it's not an accident. Everything that happens in this universe happens with the express permission of our God, and the very fact that there was lot of fishing going on in the Lake of Galilee was just not an accident. I am sure that in the ages of eternity past, God planned that there should be fishing company there, the sons of Zebedee and Simon, and that they should engage in fishing. For you see you cannot get a better illustration of a believer's work. He is to be a fisher of men as we read here. So there were fish in the lake.

H.A. Ironside used to say that when he went to see the Sea of Galilee he stood down by the side of one of the little wharfs when they brought in a large catch of fish, and he heard some of the men speak of them as *Pesau St. Pierre* -- Fish of Saint Peter -- and he was impressed by that and he went up to one of the men, and he said, “Say.” He said, “Are these some of the fish that Peter caught?” This man said, “No they are not some of the fish that Peter caught. However they are the children of some that Peter did not catch.” [Laughter] So here with the fish and the crowd the Lord Jesus was preaching.

Now when he finished preaching we read in the 4th verse that he turned to Simon who may have been in the boat taking care of his own vessel. “Peter, I want you to launch out into the deep, and I want you to let down your nets for a draught.”

Now I do not know of course, and I cannot say this with absolute certainty, but in the light of the fact that Peter will use the word nevertheless in just a moment. I have a hunch that Peter was disturbed by this request for after all the Apostle Peter was a fisherman not as hobby, but a fisherman by trade. And no doubt there were very few in that lake who knew more about fishing than the Apostle Peter. I just believe, knowing him as I know him that there must have been an expert fisherman. He was so human I

think he must have know fish well too, and here mind you is a carpenter who is not a fisherman, and after they have toiled all night, he tells peter, “Now Peter” in the middle of the day, apparently so far as we can tell. “I want you to launch out into the deep and let down your nets for draught.”

Now I say this disturbing to Peter because first of all our Lord was a carpenter and he was fisherman, and the carpenter was trying to tell the fisherman how to fish. Furthermore it was disturbing to him because they had just toiled all night, and had caught nothing. As far as Peter was concerned there was not a fish to be caught that morning at all. They had tried and mind you this is a small lake, and so they had a good idea of how fish were to be caught, and where they were to be caught, and they had tried and they caught nothing. And here is a man in the middle of day who says now I want you to launch out into the deep and let down your nets. Not just let them down and see if you can catch something, but let them down so that you can catch a draught of fishes.

And finally I think it is also contradicted by the principles of fishing.

Now I have to be carefully here because you will discover that I am not a fisherman at all. I don't know anything about fishing. I have been fishing a few times but I don't really know anything about it, but good fisherman tell me that it's not ordinarily easy to catch fish in the middle of the day when it's hot. As I understand it this are intelligent little animals, and when the middle of the day comes and it is hot, they don't like to perspire and more that we do, and so they dive deep down into the water in order to believer cool. Now in the night time when it is cooler and when men are not around, they will come upon the surface in order to feed better, so at night you can expect to catch them in the shallows, but in the day time it's a difficult thing because they are usually down deep in the lad, but here is a man who is telling a fisherman, something that is absolutely contrary to principles of fishing, launch out into the deep and let down your nets and catch a draught of fishes.

Well now, let's see how Peter responds to this. “And Simon answering said unto him, (Now I want you to notice that Luke uses for Peter throughout is Simon with one exception. And by the way this is the only exception in the whole of the Gospel of Luke too, which we will see in a moment.) Master, (Peter said to the Lord Jesus.) Master, (now notice he does not say Lord, but Master *epistates*, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.

Now the very fact that Peter calls the Lord Jesus Master is an evidence that he has been acquainted with the Lord Jesus previously. Now we know from the study of the gospels that Peter was called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus through Andrew his brother, remember Andrew came into contact with the Lord Jesus, and John says, “He first findeth his own brother, Peter and he brought him to Jesus.”

I remember William Temple, later bishop of the Anglican Church, who said, in one of his books, “He brought him to Jesus the greatest thing that one man can do for another man.” And how true that is. Listen the greatest thing that you can ever do for anyone else is to introduce them to the Lord Jesus Christ. You may preach to them for the rest of your life, but nothing is more significant than the introduction of a person to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Peter had come to know the Lord Jesus, and when Peter was in the presence of the Lord Jesus, you remember he looked at Peter and he said, “Your name is Peter or Simon, but from now on you are going to be called Cephas, the Aramaic word for stone, which is by interpretation a stone, so Peter knew the Lord Jesus, and that is why he called him Master, “Master we have toiled all night, and we have caught nothing. Nevertheless at Thy word, I will let down the net.”

Now the one thing I want you to be sure and notice here is the fact that according to this text from the human standpoint, the one key to the successful catch of fish is obedience to the word of Jesus Christ. “Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.” The father of our country was a man by the name of George Washington. He was the

man who could not remember tell a lie. That of course is one of the biggest lies that has ever been perpetrated on any group of people.

Now I am not in any sense saying that he wasn't a man known for the veracity of his statements. I am quite sure that Washington told the truth a lot better than most of us. But there is no human being who cannot tell a lie. Washington, during one of the banquets after the Revolutionary War had his mother present and there were a number of officers who were there to celebrate the victory of Washington over Lord Cornwallis, and during the course of banquet one of the French generals stood up, and he delivered a little eulogy for the general, and turning to Washington's mother, he said, "What is the secret of the life of this son whom you have raised, and she is reported to have said, "I taught him to obey."

Now that is a great lesson parents. "I taught him to obey." And that's a good lesson too children. "Children obey your parents in the Lord." Isn't that a wonderful text parents? Let me tell you a little story that illustrates this in the sports world. Most of us who turn to the sports page, are there any men who read the first page before you turn to the sports page, you may not understand this. I always take a glance at the headlines, look at the sports page, and then come back to section one, because I am interested in sports.

Some years ago I was preaching in Princeton, New Jersey. We were there for a series of meetings on the campus. And on the campus of the university while I was there I was reading the New York Times, and I never will forget an article that I read at that time about a young Negro ball player. It was his first year or second year in the big leagues. In his first full season, he won the batting crown of the national league. He was boy from Birmingham, Alabama. His name of course is known by most of us. He was Willy Mays. Arthur Daily the sports writer of the New York Times had an article that day on Willy Mays and it was very interesting and very illustrative. At the time Leo Durocher was the manger of the New York Giants, and Daily was describing a game in which Willy had just been playing.

During the course of this game the Giants were playing at that time, the Brooklyn dodger, now the Los Angeles Dodgers, and Roy Campanella was the catcher for the Dodgers. Larry Goetz was the umpire of the game and Durocher was the manager of the Giants, and usually stationed himself on the third base line. Well Mays was just a young ball player, and full of all of the exuberance of a young ball player, and I think he still has a lot of that. He was at the plate. The game was just about to begin. He was that day, the lead off batter. And they were tossing in some pitches, and finally the pitcher tossed in his last to Campanella, and Campanella fired the ball down to the second baseman signaling the start of the game. The pitcher got the ball and he was ready to make the first throw, and Willy Mays said to Mr. Goetz behind the plate. “The man says to look at the ball.” And Larry Goetz, when Willy said, “The man says to look at the ball.” Willy had turned down third base, looking at his manager, Durocher. And Goetz began to say, “Now Willy why didn’t you tell me to look at the ball before we were ready to start the game?” And he began to chew him out just a little bit, and Willy said, “The man says to look at the ball.” And all who knew Mays at that time knew that he practically worshipped the ground that Manager Durocher walked on, and so the ball was thrown in the umpire for him to look at it, and Campanella began to needle Mays hoping of course by that he could get him out when he stood up to take his turn at the plate, and Willy replied to Campanella when he was needling when he was needling him, Campanella said, “Willy you are getting to be a heel.” He said, “I do what the man says.” “I do what the man says.”

You know that is exactly the way in which our Lord is addressed by Peter here. “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.” “Lord, we have toiled all night, and we have caught nothing. (Nevertheless I do what the man says.) Nevertheless at Thy word, I will let down the net.” You know I don’t think we can have any better illustration of the secret of fruitfulness and witness for Jesus Christ. We will never be a successful witness for the Lord Jesus if we are not obedient as we read here.

Now I don't think that there is any significance in the fact that in verse 4, we have the plural “nets” and in verse 5, we have the singular “net”. As a matter of fact, in many of the ancient manuscripts both verses have the plural. I do remember in the theology classroom at the seminary one time, one of my professors who had not looked at the Greek text that day made a great point over the difference between “nets” in one verse and “net” in the second as if Peter gave only a limited obedience. The Lord Jesus has said, “Let down the nets.” And he only let down one of the nets, and he made quite an application of it, until finally one of the students, you know students can be the cruelest of people. I am speaking from experience too. Finally one of the cruel students in the classroom raised his hand after he had made his point, with great elaboration. “Dr. So and So in the Greek text both of the words are plural.” Well I have never seen a professor so deflated. He had wasted five minutes at least and everybody knew it.

Now it's possible some of the manuscripts do have the singular. He didn't know that much on the spur of the moment that morning because he hadn't looked at his Greek text. It's possible, but if the ancient manuscripts are to be preferred, there is no point to make. In fact I think the whole context suggests that Peter does let down the nets, because in a moment, we read about the nets and how they were about to sink. So I don't think that we should make any point about that, but now notice the 6th verse, “And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.”

Now the rationalists when they read this passage they come to this point, and they say, “Well now it's obvious that what happened was this. That the Lord Jesus had seen a school of fish playing out in that lake, and seeing that school of fish, he had pointed them to this school of fish, and they went out and they let down their nets and that school of fish just hopped right into the nets of the sons of Zebedee and company, and they were able to catch all of these fish.”

Now I do not believe that for one moment, because you know if anybody knew there was going to be school of fish in the Sea of Galilee, and if one was playing out

there I am quite sure that Peter would have known about it already. He would have already left them sitting on the seashore and he would have been out catching that school of fish. You know I have learned this about the liberals and their interpretation of the word of God. It takes a lot more faith to believe their explanations than it does to believe the simple teaching of the word of God. “So they inclosed a great multitude of fish, and their nets began to brake.” And you can just hear those nets beginning to tear and suddenly they are shouting to one another, they beckoned to their partners which were on the other ship, and said, “Come and help us we are about to loose our nets and the fish.” And so they came and they filled both the ships, and you can see those ships. They are just down to water level you know, and they are just barely able to get into shore because of the fact of the great miraculous draught of fishes that they had caught.

Now in the 8th verse we read, “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Now I want you to notice here, that he has called the Lord Jesus, Master. A term which one man might use of a teacher or might use of someone who has some human authority, but when Peter uses the word *kurios* here it is quite obvious in the light of context that he is according the Lord Jesus all of the honor and glory that belongs to the omnipotent God who is the creator of all. “Depart from me for I am a sinful man oh Lord.” I was reading a liberal commentary on Luke as I was preparing this message, and even this liberal commentary says that this word in this passage has its full religious meaning.

Now what he meant by that was that Peter was acknowledging that anyone who could send them out into the midst of that lake an enable them to catch a miraculous draught of fishes after they had fished all night, and caught nothing must be God himself, so “Depart from me for I am a sinful man oh Lord.” I love this because here you see the shifting sand of Simon becomes the solid rock Peter. For his is at the knees of the Lord Jesus, and I said as we were reading in Scripture, I wanted you to notice while Luke describes Peter in this verse, he says, “And when Simon Peter saw it.”

Now he's been calling him Simon all through this gospel. In fact he will from now on call him Simon. This is the only time that Luke calls Peter, Simon Peter. Now we know that Simon of course was a name that suggested a weak and watery kind of individual. But Peter is the name that suggests him as the rock, and so I gather from this that Luke is making a point of the fact that when a feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, then and then only does he become a rock. For when he is at the feet of the Lord Jesus, then all of the power and all of the authority of the Lord Jesus becomes available to that man.

Now this morning we had a wonderful Sunday school lesson on the healing of the noblemen's or the Centurion's servant, and in the course of that lesson when the Lord Jesus expressed that astonishment at the faith of an individual. You remember that the Centurion when he spoke to the Lord Jesus he said to him something like this. He said, “Sir, I'm a man under authority,” or rather let me go back a verse. He said, “I'm not worthy that you should come under the roof of my house, and further more it's not necessary that you come.” He had sent the elders of the Jew to the Lord Jesus. He said, “Just speak in a word and thy servant shall be healed.” And then he said, “Why?” “For” he says, “I indeed am a man set under authority and I say to this one go, and he goes, and I say to this one come and he comes.” And the Lord Jesus was astonished. And he turned around and he said, “Why do you know I haven't found such faith as this in all of Believers Chapel or all of Israel, all of the church of Christ.”

What had he done? Why he had simply recognized that the Lord Jesus Christ was supreme, supreme. “I am a man under authority, but Jesus Christ is not a man under authority. I am indeed a man under authority. I am a Centurion. I am under Rome. But Lord Thou art above Rome. You can just speak in the word and my servant shall be healed.” He recognized the Lord Jesus for what he is the Son of God. And in so recognizing him as the Son of God our Lord was astonished that someone could see him as he really is, and that of course is the height of faith isn't it to recognize Christ for what he is.

Now Peter said, “Lord, depart from me for I am sinful man. Lord” Joshua had an experience like this. I have referred you to this before remember? He was out reconnoitering around Jericho, thinking of battering rams and ladders all kinds of human devices whereby he may take the city of Jericho, and as he was about the city he saw a man. So the text says, over against him with a sword drawn in his hand, and he went up to this man, and he said to him, “Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?”

Now you don’t answer a question like that with a no, but that’s the answer the he got. “No, but as the captain of the Lord’s host have I come.” And in that word General Joshua became Lieutenant General Joshua. For you see the man who was with the sword in his hand had been before Joshua at Jericho, was none other than the pre incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, and he had said to Joshua this? “Joshua it’s not enough to be appointed to this task of leading Israel. It’s not enough to be trained by Moses. In order to be successful in leading God’s people you must recognize that I am really the general of the Lord’s host.” And then I think this must have been a great comfort to Lieutenant General Joshua, for the man said, when Joshua replied, “What sayeth my Lord unto his servant?” The Lord said, to him, “Joshua, loose your feet from off your shoes because the ground on which you stand is holy ground,”

Now that would have been a great comfort to Joshua, because he would have remember that Moses, his great leader, had had and experience like that before, and it would have convinced him that the same God who lead Moses is the God who now will lead him providing he will be subordinate to him.

Now we must learn that in Believers Chapel. We must learn that constantly in Believers Chapel. We must learn that the head of this assembly is not Lewis Johnson. The head of this assembly is not the group of elders. The head of this assembly is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we must always recognize him as the captain of the Lord’s host. This is one reason why we gather around the Lord’s table and acknowledged his head ship because he is the head of the church.

Well Peter has learned a lot. He had looked at this mighty miracle, and he has seen the hand of God in it. And in seeing the hand of God in it, he has necessarily taken a look at Peter, and in looking at Peter of course he has discovered things that are not so attractive to the eye. And whenever we see the Lord Jesus as he is, and then take a look at ourselves we're always going to find this to be true.

Now listen, all of you self righteous Christians sitting in this audience, if there are any such. Some of you are smiling. Some of you are smiling, and you know I can tell from the smiles on your faces you are not smiling because you think it's the person next to you. You wouldn't smile if you thought it was the person next to you. You would be afraid of disclosing that you think they are self-righteous. The fact that you smile is because you know that deep down in your heart too there is a lot of that isn't there?

Now you know it's a good thing always for us to take a look at ourselves in the light of our Lord Jesus, and so Peter says, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man oh Lord.” In the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in his presence every single one of us will see ourselves for what we really are. We are sinners. We are sinners as long as we are Christians. We are sinners. In fact James calls believers, “Ye adulteresses and sinners” because we never lose that character.

Now of course we by faith may stand before God in all of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and know we have acceptance, but we know we have acceptance because of that which Jesus Christ has done for us not because of what we are in ourselves ever, ever. And so Peter learns that. He learns the same old truth that Job learned. “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes see Thee wherefore I repent, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. Abhor myself.” Isaiah, “Woe is me.” When he saw the Lord high and lifted up. “For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the Lord the Lord of hosts.” It's always true. So Peter has seen the Lord. What a wonderful thing that is. I think it delights the

heart of God almost more than anything else, when we really see the Lord and in the light of that look, take a look at ourselves.

Well he was astonished, and all that were with him at the draught of the fishes, which they had taken, and so also was James and John the sons of Zebedee, which were partners in the company. I wonder whether this was a partnership or a corporation or was it a British limited company? Which was it? Well we can't answer that. “And Jesus said unto Simon (now notice, not Simon Peter, Simon.) fear not Simon.” You know whenever we learn ourselves, whenever we see ourselves in honesty before God he never causes us to depart his presence. The Lord Jesus had heard Peter say, “Depart from me.” But instead the Lord speaks to him and says, “Fear not Peter from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

Now I have eight or nine minutes left according to my watch or six or so. I want to say just a word or two now about catching men. For you see this is the task of the church, and this is the task of an individual. And I think it's very suggestive that in the background of this fishing incident the Lord Jesus speaks to Peter and says, “From henceforth thou shalt catch men.” No longer fish Peter. You are going to have to stop going out to the old fishing hole. You are going to have to put away the pole, and you are going to have to put away all of your equipment. You are going to have to start catching men.

Now that doesn't mean that Peter has to give up fishing entirely. It's not long after the resurrection you know when Peter says, “I go a fishing.” And as far as I can tell there is nothing in the context of John 21 that says a Christian cannot go fishing. He can go out on the golf course, and he can play golf, and he can do lots of other things, which are good honest times of recreation. But against the background of this fishing the Lord Jesus said, “Peter you are going to catch men, not fish.” I love the Greek word. It's the word that really means to catch alive. You are not going to catch fish and kill them and eat them, but you are going to catch alive men.

Now I think that it is significant that this activity of fishing is used to illustrate the activity of a Christian. Now what are some of the comparisons? Well, you know if you are going to catch fish you have to have equipment. Now all you have to have is a pole. You don't have to have elaborate equipment. We all remember the cartoons and the pictures that we have seen. I remember one on the Saturday Evening Post about twenty-five years ago. Yes, twenty-five years ago. There was a picture of a man who was a middle-aged man about forty, thirty-five walking along and he had all the latest equipment. His clothes were shiny. They had just come from Neiman's sports department, the men's boutique or whatever you call it. He had the nicest shoes, equipment. He had every piece of equipment. He had to elaborate fishing equipment, and he had obviously been fishing all day because he looked very discouraged, and he was walking along with his cane, and he had no fish. And then there was a little old boy in tattered pants, came down somewhere between his knees and his feet. He didn't have on any shoes. All he had was just one old cane pole and it was over his shoulder, and a long line hanging off of that and a simple hook, but on his side he had a long string of big lovely fish, and there was a big lesson taught in that. But you know you do have to have equipment.

Now how can you fish for men if you do not have spiritual equipment? What is the spiritual equipment for fishing for men? Well in the first place you must be alive. You must be born again. You must be a believer yourself. You cannot fish for men if you have not received the new birth yourself. In other words you must know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Now that is the first requirement for fishing for men. By the way do you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior? Have you put your trust in him? I am not asking you whether you are a Presbyterian or Baptist or an Anglican or a Catholic or whatever it may be. I am asking you have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the first requirement. No man can fish who is not alive, but it's impossible for us to fish for men if

we do not have some knowledge of the word of God. How can we possibly lead someone to the Lord Jesus if we do not know how to present the gospel clearly ourselves? And if I may be just a little critical I am told by many preachers never scold. But I want to scold just a little bit in spite of it in love. I do think that there are a lot of us Christians who have really believed in the Lord Jesus, but for the life of us we could not clearly present the gospel to someone who did not know Christ as Savior.

Now we ought to learn how to present the gospel clearly and simply that men are lost. They are sinners before God, whether they are self righteous or church members or have been baptized or whatever it may be, but they are lost before God and that Christ has died for their sins. And they may have everlasting life by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, not joining the church, not praying through, not doing good works, not being baptized and so forth. We ought to know the gospel. That's the first thing. You cannot fish without equipment. You cannot fish for men if you do not have equipment. And secondly even though you have the most elaborate equipment like our man on the front of the Saturday Evening Post. You cannot fish for men successfully if you are not willing to try. After all you have to go a fishing, and many of us sit in the audience and we know how to present the gospel, and you've been saying, "Well, Dr. Johnson you are not talking about me. I know the gospel. I know it plainly and clearly." Where are all the people that you have lead to the Lord? Where are all of our converts? Where are your fish? Let me see your line.

You see we have not been fishing, as we ought. We have not been taking advantage of the opportunities that we have been given by God, and then of course we also need experiences don't we? Not only equipment and the exercise of that equipment, but we do have to have some experience. Generally speaking a new born babe in Christ is not as a good fisherman for men as one who has learned how to catch fish, just as you have to know how to catch fish in order to catch fish. Isn't it amazing how some people can get out on the lake and catch nothing, and then someone who knows something

about fish can come in with fish? It's not always luck you know. It's not always luck. Ask any fisherman. You have to learn something about fish. You have to know where those fish play. You have to know where they feed. You have to know when they get up, and you have to know when they go to sleep. And the same thing is true of fishing for men. You have to learn men. You have to know how to catch them. You have to know their lives, their characters, their activities, their actions, all of their characteristics, and then you have to know how to fit the hook to the fish. You have to know the exact lure that will help that particular person catch on and become a Christian. And so there is need for experience, and of course there is also need for an example, a tutor. The best thing in learning to fish is to go out with a good fisherman. We'd learn a lot more wouldn't we?

You know if wanted to learn how to cast and I could have any instructor in the world. I think I would go to Ted Williams. He is one of the greatest in the world. And I would ask him to let me come along with him, so I could learn from him. The same thing is true in spiritual fishing for men. We need to have an example and our example is the Lord Jesus Christ. “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Now let me just give you a little story as we close because I think this illustrates what it means to be in touch with the Lord Jesus, and which will enable you having been born again, and having the equipment to catch men. There was a Scottish man by the name of John Cameron. He was man who was a shepherd. And he had a large, we would say ranch, in Scotland. And he had a man who was a plowman, and he had hired this man.

Now John Cameron was an outstanding Christian worker. He was known all over the countryside in the highlands for bringing people to Jesus Christ. It almost seemed as every time he spoke he led someone to the Lord. Oswald Chambers is one of the Christian writers, who many of you have read. He knew John Cameron, and one time he went to visit Mr. Cameron, and Mr. Cameron came to Mr. Chambers and he said, “Now if you get permission I want you to speak to my plowman about the Lord.” Mr. Chambers

looked at him, and he said, “Well why don’t you do it, John.” That was a natural answer. He said, “Mr. Oswald, I said if you get permission. If you don’t know what it is to get permission from the Lord, the you don’t know anything about fishing for men.” And Mr. Chambers heard the completion or sequel to that story sometime after it. They had been over those hills in Scotland, day after day, month after month for several years. Never once had John Cameron spoken to his plowman. Finally one day the plowman after he had seen John Cameron lead numbers of people to the Lord in his presence finally the plowman turned to him and said, “For God’s sake, John, speak to me about my soul, or I am going to hell.” And with that, he lead him to the Lord, and then the man said to him, “John why didn’t you speak to me until today.” And he said, “Well you probably the reason better than I. I never got permission from the Lord.” He said, “Well John I will tell you this. That I told my mateys when you feed me, that is when you hired me, that when old John talks to me about religion, I am really going to tell him off.” So you see that’s why God never gave him permission.

Now, listen Christians, God wants you to be a fisher of men. Now he will not want you to go out and spread your tracks and your words indiscriminately. He will want you to sew the seed in touch with the Lord of the harvest, the Lord Jesus. He will not want you to use that as an excuse so that you never talk to anyone about the Lord. But he will want you to fish for men in touch with the Lord of the harvest.

Now may God grant that we do that for his namesake? Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be in abide with us all until Jesus comes. For we ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.