

Luke 5:1-11

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

In today's Scripture, Luke shows us that Jesus is already popular by the time he recruited his first disciples. The crowd was pressing in on him to hear him speak. When there is a large crowd it is harder to hear. So, the people are pressing in, this indicates a rather large crowd. Luke gives us a very significant detail – to hear the word of God. So, it is not that Jesus is preaching and teaching, it is much more important, Jesus is delivering the Word of God. Simon's response to Jesus is "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man?" This is very important for us to understand. Simon is repentant. Instead of denial, he has a moment of disclosure or revelation. The unexpected catch of fish reveals the divine nature of Jesus and is the catalyst for a significant response. Peter realizes who Jesus is, accepts who Jesus is, and reflect upon himself and his role in the relationship. There are three important things going on here in the Scripture; the individual reflects on who he or she is, and also reflects on who Jesus is, and then responds accordingly. This is our call to follow Jesus.

When Rev. Carlton Lyon, a Timothy of Madison Heights Christian Church, first suggested that I become a pastor, my response was not "go away from me," but "I am too old." At that time I was around thirty five. He did not give up on me and repeated the suggestion. Like most people, I put ministers up on a pedestal above my realm of worthiness. I responded with a rebuttal of unworthiness. I have repeatedly noticed a similar reaction from others, especially when selecting elders. The most common response is "I am not worthy." This is partially a good response because it indicates to some degree that the person is aware of who they are and who Jesus is. They just simply have not reached the point to where they respond to the call to follow Jesus.

The contemporary lesson for us deals with worthiness. When it comes to who of us is worthy to receive God's love, total forgiveness, be in relationship with God as a child of God, and receive everlasting life - none of us is worthy. At the baptism of Jesus John the Baptist said "I am not worthy to untie his sandals" (Luke 3:16). The Centurion

in Capernaum said “I am not worthy to have you come under my room” (Luke 7:6). However, the individual interpretation of worthiness does not redirect Jesus. Worthiness is not who we are; worthiness is the goal. The scriptures do not teach that you are worthy; they teach that righteousness comes through faith. Worthy is not who we are - it is who we are to become. The objective is to steer your life towards worthiness. Being worthy is not a status of who we are now, but a life long journey to get closer to God, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Everybody that sees the self as unworthy is someone that has engaged in the necessary reflection that leads to repentance. This is very important because repentance is the key thing that God is always looking for. There are hundreds of biblical lessons on the call for repentance. When Jesus calls you to follow, he does not call the perfect. He calls you, the broken vessels of fallen humanity, to follow, to listen and learn, watch and copy.

Most commentaries state that the disciples abandoned everything to become disciples of Jesus. I think another way of looking at it is from the perspective of a reorientation of life. You have to be willing to change. This stems from repentance which comes from a consideration of your own degree of worthiness. It is the change in you that God is looking for - recognizing your unworthiness and doing something about it.

The call to follow Jesus calls for the individual to recognize who Jesus is, acknowledge that you are not worthy, and repent. When we are in the presence of the Lord, there is always a sense of unworthiness. We are fallible human beings facing the Lord. If there is not a sense of unworthiness then humility is lacking. Salvation is offered to those who are unworthy that desire to change and live a life directed towards the Lords worthiness. We all claim to have faith in Jesus and we all claim to follow Jesus. The real lesson for us is to discern the disparity between the faith that we clam and what we actually do, and then take action to resolve the variance.