

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

¹ So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the Word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ² and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. ³ Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. ⁴ When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your Word I will let down the net." ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. ⁷ So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." ¹¹ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Luke 5:1-11 A 2/10/19 Isaiah 6:1-5 1 Corinthians 14:12b-20 Psalm 40 Resp. Ps.: 56
Hymns: 39, 436, 428, 422

AT YOUR WORD, I WILL FOLLOW YOU

- 1. I follow, whether or not Your will makes sense to me**
- 2. I follow, knowing I will be blessed**
- 3. I follow, bringing others with me**

I am trusting Thee to guide me; Thou alone shalt lead,
Every day and hour supplying all my need.

I am trusting Thee for power; Thine can never fail.
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me must prevail. (TLH #428:4-5)

Dear friends in Christ,

At times we find ourselves in situations in which we're not sure what the Lord expects us to do. We think, "I don't understand why You are putting me through this, Lord. What You seem to be asking of me doesn't make sense to me." Today's text gives us help for such times. The Lord urges us to follow His will for us, whether or not it makes sense to us. The Lord blesses us when we follow His will. As we follow the Lord, we tell others about Him, so that they, too, may follow Him.

-1-

Our text begins with a large crowd of people gathered around Jesus to hear His Word. There were so many of them that they couldn't all hear Him. They were standing by two boats along

the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus got into a boat owned by Peter, and asked Peter to move it a little way from shore so that everyone could see and hear Him.

Peter was busy washing his nets, getting ready for that night's work. In faith, Peter dropped what he was doing, and took Jesus out in his boat. Peter put Jesus and His Word first. Peter was willing to do what he could so that Jesus could spread the Gospel. One commentator says:

As we learn to trust in Jesus as our Savior, His saving Word also becomes more important to us than all our earthly tasks and activities. When His saving Word is being taught and preached, we will find time and take time to listen for the nourishment of our souls. Because we treasure His saving Word, we will also gladly do what we can in the way of offering help so that it can be taught and preached to many others. (Sermon Studies on the Gospels, series C, NPH, p. 92)

When Jesus had finished speaking He turned to Peter and said, *“Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”* Peter answered, *“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your Word I will let down the net.”* Jesus' request made no sense to Peter. Fish were caught at night in the shallow water in the Sea of Galilee. Peter and the others had fished all night and hadn't caught a thing. Yet Jesus told Peter to fish during the day in deep water. What Jesus asked him to do went against everything Peter knew as a professional fisherman.

Sometimes the Lord allows us to go through things and expects things of us which don't make sense to us. God is testing our faith to see if we will follow Him and His Word anyway. When Jesus tested Peter, Peter didn't complain, or ask Jesus why. Neither should you and I complain, or try to figure out why God does certain things He does. Peter said, *“At Your Word I will let down the net.”* *“At Your Word,”* Jesus. This is one of the most important lessons of our text. At God's Word, we follow Him.

Psalm 119:105 says, *“Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.”* God's Word directs our lives. Whenever we need to be reassured that we're forgiven and saved, whenever we need to know if something is right or wrong, good or bad, whenever we need to know what to do, we turn to God's Word. If there is a conflict between what we think and what God says in His Word, we say, *“At Your Word,”* Lord, I will follow You.” *“I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His Word I do hope”* – Psalm 130:5.

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Peter and the others followed Jesus' direction, and let down their net. *“They caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.”* God gave Peter an amazing blessing. The Lord sometimes puts us through situations which we can't understand – which seem impossible to us – to teach us, as Scripture says, that *“the things that are impossible with men are possible with God”* (Lk. 18:27).

At times, the Lord confronts us with our own weaknesses and inabilities. There was no logic to the situation Jesus put Peter in. But that's exactly what Jesus wanted. Peter had to leave everything in Jesus' hands.

Sometimes we turn to the Lord "when all else fails." The Lord has to teach us to rely only on Him. The Lord told the Apostle Paul, *"My grace is enough for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* Paul was moved to reply, *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ... For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Cor. 12:9-10). We all have weaknesses. We can't do everything on our own. When we rely on Jesus to help us, we can face and do whatever we have to!

Jesus richly rewarded Peter's trust in Him. Peter and the other men caught so many fish that their net started to break. The other boat came to help. There were so many fish that the weight came close to sinking both boats. Ephesians 3:20 says that God *"is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."* The Lord sometimes puts you and me through difficult tests of our faith. But He blesses us after He has tested us. As He did with Peter, the Lord can cause things to work out so much better than we ever hoped for. Remember this. Our Heavenly Father loves to give blessings His children. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight"* – Proverbs 3:5-6.

Jesus' miracle had a profound effect on Peter. *"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken."* Before Peter had called Jesus, "Master," submitting to His will. Now Peter calls Jesus, "Lord," in awe of Jesus as God. Peter confesses that he is *"a sinful man,"* unworthy even to be in the presence of Almighty God, much less be so richly blessed by Him.

Jesus tells Peter, *"Do not be afraid;"* in the original literally, *"Do not continue to be afraid."* Jesus comforted Peter with His grace and forgiveness. Peter could stop being afraid of Jesus, and instead stand before Him and serve Him. As we sinners stand before the almighty, holy God we understand our need for Jesus, the Savior of sinners. Jesus says, *"The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost"* (Lk. 19:10). Unworthy sinners though we are, as we turn to Jesus in repentance and look to Him for help, He never leaves us or forsakes us. He graciously forgives us and helps us and blesses us. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* – Romans 8:32.

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Jesus tells Peter, *"From now on you will catch men."* Our text concludes by saying that Peter, James, and John *"brought their boats to land, ... forsook"* (from the original, *"gave up, left behind"*) *"all, and followed [Jesus]."* They left everything behind, and that was a lot. They just made that huge catch of fish, which would have brought them a great deal of money. Peter owned his own boat. The Gospel of Mark informs us that James and John came from a family wealthy enough to have servants (Mk. 1:21). Fishing was the biggest industry in that region. Fish was one of the Jews' favorite foods, and their cured fish was famous throughout the Roman world. The area where the disciples fished was in a large center of trade. Yet they left this all

behind, with no complaints and no questions, and followed Jesus. And why not! They had found a Lord who does not forsake sinners, but forgives and welcomes them. The Lord richly blesses His children, certainly with spiritual blessings, and with so many earthly blessings as well.

The Lord called Peter, James, and John to be public ministers of His Word. He told them, “*You will catch*” (the original is on-going: “*you will be catching*”) “*men.*” “*Catching*” in the original literally means to “*catching alive.*” Usually fishing results in the death of the fish that are caught. But the purpose of the Gospel is to rescue people from eternal death, and give them eternal life! Jesus’ calling of Peter, James, and John was an effectual calling – they followed Him willingly.

The calling to the office of the public ministry, whether as a pastor or Christian day school teacher, is a blessed calling from God. It is one which we do well to encourage our young people to consider. 1 Timothy 3:1 says, “*If any man aspires to the office of [the ministry], it is a fine work he desires to do.*” It is “*a fine work*” because a pastor and Christian day school teacher are always working with God’s Word – the message that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save sinners. “*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*” – Romans 1:16.

Jesus asks each one of us to follow Him, in whatever our calling may be. In whatever area of life the Lord leads us, we want to continually ask, “Lord, use me to spread Your saving Gospel to others. Through what I say and what I do” (because our lives are continually ‘preaching a sermon’), “use me to bring others to You.” And through our prayers and offerings, we’re continually supporting others who can keep spreading the Gospel where we can’t be ourselves.

Why does the Lord sometimes put us through difficult times, expecting of us things we don’t understand? He does it to test our faith, to see if we will follow His Word. He does it to bless us, unworthy sinners though we are, so much more than we deserve or expect. He does it to keep us following Him, and to use us to bring others to Him. “Savior, lead. We follow You!”

Savior, I follow on, Guided by Thee,
Seeing not yet the hand that leadeth me.
Hushed be my heart and still, Fear I no further ill,
Only to meet Thy will My will shall be.

Savior, I long to walk Closer with Thee;
Led by Thy guiding hand, Ever to be
Constantly near Thy side, Quickened and purified,
Living for Him who died Freely for me. Amen. (TLH #422:1, 4)