



Roanoke, Virginia

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## ***“Deep Dive Pt. 2”***

*Luke 5:1-11*

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I want to begin by saying how moving it was to see our youth lead worship last week. If you have not seen the two services, I highly encourage you to check out the livestream—both services were recorded and both services were amazing, impressive, and deep. So, with my heart still full from last week, it so happened that today’s sermon title is an unplanned Part 2 of *Deep Dive*. I just hope I can preach with the same vulnerability and power of the seniors who preached last week.

When we arrive at our passage, Jesus has been on the move. We read in chapter 4 of Jesus being tempted by the evil one, and passing every test put forth by the devil. We read of Jesus teaching in the synagogues of Galilee, the synagogues of Nazareth and Capernaum. While in his hometown of Nazareth, he was rejected and nearly thrown off a cliff. While in Capernaum, he encountered a man possessed by an unclean Spirit, rebuked the Spirit, and the man was left unharmed. We also read of Jesus in Simon’s house, where he healed Simon’s mother-in-law, of which word spread, and many brought their sick to Jesus for healing. He laid hands on each of them and cured them. We also read of Jesus finding some alone time in a deserted place—which was short-lived because the crowds found him and tried to prevent him from leaving. To this Jesus said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.”



By the time we reach chapter 5, Jesus is still moving, still teaching, still transforming lives. His ministry is unfolding in real time, calling people into something new.

Listen for God's word as it comes to us from Luke 5:1-11.

*<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>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." <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.*

Take a second and reflect on your own journey of faith. You likely resonate with what Jesus has just been through. There is temptation, an experience of difficulty, a moment of decision. You face whatever test is thrown at you, and then, by the grace of God, you emerge, coming out of the difficult situation with a renewed sense of purpose. Then, changes begin to occur. This is the beginning of transformation. And you find yourself on a new journey, which leads to rejection. Yet, you carry on and you encounter new people and new places. And finally, or at least as far as chapter 4 is concerned, you find that the lens of your perspective widens, you see the grandness and goodness of life, the beauty of an expanded view.

Looking at the Jesus-events chronicled here at the beginning of his ministry, we see in this section the journey of faith. Yet, we should not see ourselves in the place and character of Jesus alone. We are not Jesus. Can we learn from Jesus? Yes, of course. But we must also see ourselves in and learn from other characters, those who are lost and trying to find their way, those who are challenged, those who make mistakes, those who encounter Jesus, and those who are being called.



And the central figures in our passage for today are the fishermen.

I am going to be honest with you. I really don't like fishing. I love the idea of fishing, but I just find it rather... Now, Broaddus Fitzpatrick and Ken Lyons before you come at me, I have never gone fly fishing... still waiting to set that trip up, ok?! (see what I did there)

When I was younger, my friend Jake loved fishing off the pier on our beach trips. It was fun—when we caught something. Years later, I went deep-sea fishing, excited for the BIG CATCH... but after 25 minutes of choppy waves, I had to lie down. I didn't get sick, but I didn't catch anything either. And I hope to join the Men's Fishing trip this year... which I have heard is loads of fun!

I think that's why I admire these fishermen—because they aren't fishing for fun. It's survival. It's life itself.

And they were not on some South Carolina pier or a fancy charter boat. The fishing they were doing was rough, rugged, and rather difficult. Think “Deadliest Catch” or “Wicked Tuna”, not “The Andy Griffith Show”. These professional fishermen are at the shore, washing their nets after a long night of work that didn't pay off. Cleaning their nets, ready to pack up and head home to get some rest, they are exhausted, discouraged, and ready to quit. But then Jesus, followed by a crowd, climbs into one of their boats. He gets into Simon's boat. Luckily, Simon has met Jesus before—when he entered Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law—so when Jesus requests Simon to push out a bit into the water so he can preach to the crowd, Simon does so without hesitation. But after preaching to the crowd, Jesus turns to him and says, “Go back out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

Unlike Jesus' first request, this request might have come with some hesitation. Simon is exhausted and deflated. And I can imagine Simon murmuring under his breath, “What does this carpenter's son know about fishing?!” But Simon gets in the boat and goes back into the deep waters to cast his nets again.

You see friends, there are moments along our faith journey when we are called to put out a little way from the shore. It is comfortable. It is predictable. It is something doable as we stay in the shallow waters where our feet can touch and we can see the bottom. But then, as the Rev. Irene Pak Lee says, “there comes a point along the faith journey where we are invited to go into deeper waters, not to just go there, but to work. To throw down nets. To do some heavier lifting. To serve. To bear witness.” It is in those moments when the work involves going back out into the deep waters, that we find something surprising and abundant.

For you deeper waters might be a place of deeper questions about faith, or deep pain we feel through a situation in our lives, or deep concepts about justice that make us uncomfortable. Deeper



waters are different for each of us. Maybe it's a place of past failure. Maybe it's grief, fear, or injustice that feels overwhelming. Maybe it's a call to an unfamiliar place, working with people whose struggles we don't yet understand. Or maybe it's the place we try to hide from or not pay attention to—whether internal or external. And sometimes, when we push out further and further into deeper waters, we too often panic—we can't see the bottom and we lose our footing. Fear of the unknown takes over, and we turn back to the safety of the shallow clear waters to find our footing. We don't like losing our footing, or really the illusion of control. Yet, it is in deeper waters where we experience something life changing. It's where transformation happens.

Debbie Thomas writes, “Maybe [Jesus] has good reasons for asking us to return to old places of pain and failure. In any case, when he asks, he doesn't stand at the shore and wave us forward; he steps into the boat and ventures into the deep water with us. Is his timing maddening sometimes? Yes. But maybe his timing is also perfect. Maybe we're most open to epiphanies when we've exhausted our own resources and know that we've got nothing much to lose in saying “yes” to one more attempt—this time with Jesus at our side.”

Have you experienced a moment or moments like that? Utterly exhausted, deeply deflated, at the end of your rope, but you respond, like Simon, “if you say so.” And it is then and there we find something transformational.

Yet if we go even deeper, we find that casting our nets for our own sake is not enough. There is more. It is in the deep waters of transformation that our purpose is redefined: “From now on you will be catching people.”

So, I wonder if the invitation and call to deeper waters and to cast our nets is not about us at all. I wonder if it is more about lifting others up from the deep waters they are experiencing. And if so, looking at this passage, we see the need for two things: proximity and praxis.

I am sure Jesus, being the Son of God and all, could have brought the fish to the shore for the fishermen to catch. But he didn't. Instead, Jesus invited Simon and the others to experience deeper waters first, before abundance. We must start by going out into deeper waters, to be near the oppressed, to listen to the disenfranchised, to sit with the unsheltered, to comfort the weary.

Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*, writes, “We cannot help people from a distance.” We must wade into the deep waters, to the places of discomfort, to the comforted people, to learn something new and listen to the untold stories, to lean into the idea that our liberation is bound in theirs.

But being there is not enough either. Jesus' invitation to Simon is two-fold, and the second part is the invitation to cast nets. First you have proximity, then you have praxis; you have association, then you have action; you have relationship, then you have response. Casting your net



is working in concrete ways to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, let the oppressed go free.” Jesus is inviting you, me, us, to cast our nets in deep waters in order to lift up those who are in the depths.

I don’t know exactly what that looks like to you. But I am reminded of Frederick Buechner, who said, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Again, I am not sure where that place is for you. So, I would encourage you to look deep within yourself and then take a deep look at the world around you. Where is your gladness? Where is the world’s deep hunger? Go there and cast your net!

Here at Second, casting your net might mean volunteering with video visitations through Assisting Families of Inmates.

Casting your net might mean advocating for those long silenced, whether through policy reform, legal representation, or grassroots movement.

Casting your net might mean sleeping at the Alexa House to listen to the stories of the families and be present with them as people.

Casting your net might mean creating spaces for people to heal, loving on those who have been long forgotten, tutoring the underprivileged through PCC Pathways, at Highland Park or Morningside Elementary.

Casting your net might mean speaking out for human rights, working for a more inclusive and affirming world for our LGBTQ siblings and people of color.

Casting your net might mean involvement in affordable housing and affordable healthcare initiatives.

Casting your net might mean serving the poor, visiting the lonely, welcoming the stranger, helping the sick, feeding the hungry, sheltering the unsheltered, or clothing the naked.

Whatever it is for you, you must first go to deeper waters and then cast your net because your purpose has been redefined! We are called to catch people—to lift one another from the deep, to be part of God’s abundant grace in the world.

Beloved, Jesus called those ordinary fishermen into a movement, to join a revolution that is still going on, a revolution that involves standing for love rather than for hate, standing with rather than keeping your distance, standing for involvement rather than indifference, standing for purpose rather than humdrum days to simply maintain what we have always known and done.

Jesus called those fishermen—those exhausted and deflated fishermen—to go out once more to deeper waters, but this time he was in the boat with them. They threw their nets with deep uncertainty about what might happen, and suddenly there was abundance where there was nothing.



To this Jesus says, “Do not be afraid.”

Church, go to deeper waters, cast your nets, and you will see and experience the abundance of God, for yourself and for those you are called to catch.

To God be the glory, now and forever. Amen.

