**2/9/25**

**Not Driven from God, but to God**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 5:1-11 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

I assure you that I am neither sick or tired even after enduring several days and several hours of sitting in front of a computer screen on Zoom discussing Christian Ethics with my professor and classmates. I assure you that I am not rushing to go and do more reading and research in order to type two papers in relation to two chapters of my choosing from the book that we read. I also assure you that I am not rushing to go and plan and prepare a Workshop in relation to any one of the thirteen ELCA Social Statements of my choosing. I assure you that I got adequate sleep and I have well over a month to complete and submit all of that work. I am looking forward to taking my time and breaking things down to learn more as I complete these assignments and submit them. However, I am rushing a bit this morning as we have the very business of our Annual Congregational Meeting to attend to following our Worship Service, and more importantly we have the business of breaking bread together here at the altar and then after our meeting as we fellowship with one another during our monthly coffee hour as well. We have a lot on tap here this morning, and you may admittedly get one of my shortest sermons. However, I assure you that you will not leave here without something alternative to think about and ponder on your continued journey in the faith.

With all that being said, I want to thank you for allowing me to take these classes to gain more knowledge in my continued efforts to grow on my path to ordination. The Seminary community is cool, but I really look forward to being back in front of this very community with those of you that are out there in the pews and on the conference call. I look forward to the opportunity to break thing down and explore the Living Word, to Worshiping, and to being active in the Liturgy and at the Table with you all.

So, let’s dig in here, just as I did this week as I focused on my studies and research in preparation for this Sermon. I am sure we all have come to the realization that there are several main focuses to go at from today’s Gospel Reading. Some of those probably jumped right out when we read and listened to the message. I also know for a fact that there are some points that we all have inevitably heard about over the years from various perspectives from several ministers. However, one thing that these recent classes I took taught me was to look a little deeper, and to look at the heart and the mindset of the story. With that being said, one thing I am not too sure we hear about often from the pulpit is the actions and statement from Simon Peter in verse 8. That actually seems to be rather tucked in, or it even actually seem to be out of place in this story. Now, for those of you out there squinting, tilting your head sideways, scratching your head in thought, or even trying to grab your bulletin and look let me just go ahead and read that out loud again. “But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’s knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”” (2) This, this right here is so easy to look right past, and I am sure myself and all of us, and several other pastors and people have done so in the past. However, these are the very things in our stories that I do not like to miss.

Now, we can admittedly and easily push past this and focus on the obvious points we have probably heard from the pulpit several times in the past. With that being the initial context of Jesus going out on a boat to be able to talk to more people and teach, as being out on the water kind of created an amphitheater setting so all could hear him better. Then, of course there are these guys whose job was to catch fish, yet they had not caught nothing all day. There also is Jesus who commands them to lower their nets and try again at a time, hour, and depth that was not typical for catching fish at all. Yet their obedience would lead to their nets being so full and ready to tear that even two boats could not handle the load. This is where we learn that Jesus handled the situation and there was abundance. Furthermore, the actions and words of verse 8 get glossed over even more so by the most famous statement, call, and commission from this Gospel Reading which is to come for you will be catching people moving forward. As if we have not had enough to fill our minds, or pastors have not had enough to fill their sermons, then we also could really focus on how these fellas just listened. They listened to the very point that they left behind their very livelihood and so much money and food to go on a mission with Jesus. A mission I am sure none of them ever regretted!

Wow, all those vital points, and yet I am focusing on the very actions and words from Simon Peter in verse 8. I want you to know that by no means am I minimizing all of those extremely awesome and important points, but I want to focus on that very thing that all too typically is not the focus in a sermon. Now, this may very well be my Oppositional Defiance or even my OCD in action, but I would also like to call this catching the entire message and leaving us full as we explore the Living Word together and follow our very call and commission to be disciples.

So, one thing I heard at Pericope, or Pastoral Bible Study Group a few weeks ago that really hit me was that “Recognition of guilt and unworthiness does not drive one from God, but to God.” (Pericope Comment) This, this right here is what the mindset and purpose of those very actions and statement from Simon Peter were getting at. I know that is deep, and I know that is kind of mind-blowing to be honest. However, it is at the heart of our Gospel, it is at the heart of our faith. Let me say that again, “Recognition of guilt and unworthiness does not drive one from God, but to God.” (Pericope Comment) It is mindboggling that God is never pushing us away, even after all we have and continue to do wrong. We push ourselves away all the time for one reason or another. We push ourselves away, and do not feel worthy. However, Christ continually and repeatedly says come to me, jump in my arms, I got you, I always have, and I always will!

I am absolutely sure that many of us have been very much in the same place or mindset of Simon Peter. Many of us have not felt worthy. Many of us have fell down to the ground in frustration and defeat. We have heard and know Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (NIV) (2) but that is why we are encouraged to read on and hear the entire message. This is precisely where Romans 3:24 buckles it all together and provides us with the very reassurance, “and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (NIV) (2) That redemption is there for you and for I, and for everyone else that we share the very message with as long as they come to the faith and believe. Such easy yet complicated tasks or requirements. We take the message in our hearts and are called to go and share the message with others and let God do the rest.

“Recognition of guilt and unworthiness does not drive one from God, but to God.” (Pericope Comment) So, let us confess and let us let things go as we come to our Triune God. Let us always remember that no matter how frustrated or defeated we get in our daily lives, how hard it is to follow the law given to Moses in the Ten Commandments, that Jesus came to this very earth and was an atonement for all that we have and will fall short of. Jesus’ very death and resurrection wipe out all of our guilt and unworthiness. We are people that grace has been delivered to freely, and we get the very blessing and opportunity to offer that to others that we encounter each and every day. For we remember that our very “Recognition of guilt and unworthiness does not drive one from God, but to God.” (Pericope Comment) Let’s all be driven to God, and let’s all live together here on earth being a blessing to one another, and living out the very promise of better things yet to come in heaven together as well. Let us all fall at the feet of Jesus just like Simon Peter and let it all go as we recognize our Lord and Savior with us and for us. Let us all come to the very reassurance that our Triune God has us now and forever.

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 February 9th, 2025

 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

 This act of God is characterized by abundance and provision

 February 6, 2022

 Commentary on Luke 5:1-11

 Kendra A. Mohn

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

 Most scholars think that Luke did not simply record a biography of Jesus when Luke

 wrote about 80-90 CE, but shaped the story of the Gospel and the Acts to address

 circumstances in the church of Luke’s time.

 February 10, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 5:1-11

 Ronald J. Allen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

 Prior to the reading of the Gospel for the Day — the call of the first disciples in Luke

 5:1-11 — the congregation will have heard two other texts which relate quite directly

 to it.

 February 7, 2010

 Commentary on Luke 5:1-11

 Arland J. Hultgren

(7) SermonCentral.com

 Jesus Calls Believers Into Service

 Contributed by Timm Meyer on Feb 11, 2003

 Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

 Denomination: Lutheran

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Career Change Series

 Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Feb 5, 2007

 Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

 Denomination: Lutheran

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 "Fishing Techniques For Every Christian"

 Contributed by Pastor Catherine Graham on Feb 6, 2010

 Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

 Denomination: Lutheran

(10) SermonCentral.com

 Following Jesus: Not Safe But Saved

 Contributed by Dj Thomsen on Feb 3, 2022

 Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Introduction**

 The fifth Sunday after Epiphany continues to highlight unlikely instruments and

 circumstances appointed to reveal God’s glory. “Who will go for us?” God asks. A

 person of unclean lips, a former persecutor of the church of God, and three

 fishermen who couldn’t catch a thing. More surprising still, perhaps, is that we are

 also called.

**Luke 5:1-11 (NRSVUE)**

 Jesus’ teaching of God’s word has begun to draw great crowds. For Simon,

 James, and John, Jesus’ teaching inspires hospitality, then obedience, and then

 risk. After Jesus’ creative power is revealed, fear and amazement leads these

 three fishermen to leave everything behind to become apostles.

 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 gotten 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 burst. 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’s knees, saying, “Go

 away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” 9 For he and all who were with him

 were astounded 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.