

5 Epiphany 2010
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Luke 5. 1 ff

The sermon text today is the Gospel lesson, found in Luke 5. And once again we begin with prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, this whole world is in your care and keeping, and we pray your mercy upon the peoples and nations. Provide for the needs of one and all, and use us as your servants. Let it be Lord that we follow you in faith all the days of our lives; and on the last day, by your grace, may we take our place among your saints forever in heaven. Lord Jesus in your name we pray, AMEN.

The Gospel lesson for today—Luke chapter 5. Simon Peter and his buddies have just put in a long and difficult and very frustrating shift at work. They were fishermen, you see, and they'd spent the entire night out on the water with no luck. No fish. Now when I go fishing, once every ten years or so, I really don't expect to catch anything. I really don't *want* to catch anything, just spend some time with my boys, drown a few earthworms, then stop at Captain D's on the way home—it's a good day. But for Simon Peter of course it was different. Fishing was his job, he made his living catching fish, and his family depended on the income. No fish that night meant, no money the next day. No money meant the bills pile up, the creditors keep calling; the tempers get short at home. For me, not catching anything is ok, really. For Peter, it was a guaranteed migraine headache, maybe a fight with

his wife and possible a foreclosure in the near future. In short, it was not a pleasant morning there on the beach.

Jesus shows up. Jesus shows up, and works a rather interesting miracle. Jesus tells Peter and his partners to row back on out on the lake, try it just one more time. Cast your nets over there this time. Why not, what's to lose. So Peter and his partners row back out, they cast the nets where Jesus was pointing—and catch more fish than they'd ever seen before, so many that their boats almost sink.

To which we respond, If only. If only. If only Jesus would show up and do that for me. If only Jesus would drop by the office and produce more clients, if only Jesus would come by the store and bring in more customers. If only Jesus would stop by the Chamber of Commerce, bring in a few new factories, neat miracle the Lord worked for Simon Peter, yessirree. Think He could do that for us as well? I mean, in an economy like this one, we get migraines too. Would it be too much to ask to have Jesus drop by and maybe, show us how to get a few more fish?

No, as a matter of fact, it's not too much to ask. It's not too much to ask, in fact I believe it's perfectly fine to seek the Lord's help in the world of work, fish are important after all. We need daily bread, and the Lord Himself taught us to pray for daily bread, which says to me—seeking God's help in

your work, and in your career, and in your personal financial situation, that's fine and good and not a problem. Fish are important. But obviously they're not *that* important, because after catching a boatload of 'em Simon Peter simply walked away. He left the catch there on the beach, and followed Jesus instead. Translation: Daily bread matters, but we do not live by bread alone. Daily bread matters, but we belong to Jesus Christ who died and rose again, and that changes everything. We need daily bread, we need fish, it's true—but we need Jesus more. We live not by fish, but by faith in the Son of the Living God.

And with that as my introduction, a few thoughts for us today.

#1. We *are* often frustrated, by the world of work. We spend so much time on the job, offering our work some of the very best hours of our lives—better sometimes I'm afraid than what we offer our own families—so we *need* to find success at work, not just to pay the bills but even more for a sense of meaning and accomplishment in life. Work when it tanks is worse than frustrating, it almost eats you alive and the best I can tell you. For what it's worth. You're not alone. You have a friend in Simon Peter, a very skilled fisherman who had a very bad day. Us too. I'm not going to be glib and try to talk you out of your frustration, or tell you that bad days really aren't so bad—I'll just remind you, that whatever you do in life you're

probably pretty good at it, and a rough spell at work somehow does not mean you are worthless or incompetent or a dismal failure. It means you're human, and humans have rough spells once in a while. Hang in there, and like your old friend Simon Peter—keep casting your nets.

Two. Frustration is one thing, and we all have to deal with it, we are all allowed to experience it, and in fact in a round-about way it can be a motivator, to new or better or different paths in life. Frustration is one thing, despair is another. And while you've probably figured out over the years how to deal with frustration, if you find yourself slipping into despair, get help. Frustration is natural, despair however is debilitating—get help, find a friend to talk with.

And finally, three. What a friend we have in Jesus. Cue the organ, the hymn of the day is now on its way, what a friend we have in Jesus. Look what Jesus promises to do for us. For starters, He does indeed speak to us of daily bread. He can and will provide for us and if we have a problem here, if we have a problem it's probably not that God has failed to provide daily bread. Rather, it's that we take one look at the bread and decide we want daily pizza instead. Or a daily Wendy's double, which to me is the food of heaven, but whatever, this is an on-going issue for people in a consumer society—distinguishing wants from needs. *Separating* wants from needs, but I

digress—Jesus does provide daily bread.

Jesus has also provided us with opportunities for success in life—He has!—though once again we have to look closely and separate our definition of success, from His. For our Lord Jesus, true success is not found on the usual list of suspects—money, fame, prestige, and so forth. Instead, it's faithfulness. Faithfulness—love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength, love your neighbor as yourself; trust the promises of God and follow where He leads each day, using your gifts to help others and so glorify His holy name—that's faithfulness. That's success. That's what Peter found by the way, when he walked away from the fish on the beach—true success, is to follow Jesus, all the way to the cross and empty tomb.

Jesus provides daily bread, Jesus provides a chance each day for success properly understood. And on the last day, He'll provide us with a place in the kingdom. Forgiveness, life, salvation—the Kingdom of Heaven! Our ultimate destiny is in God's care and keeping, and God will not let us down. As I say, when Peter realized this, he left the fish on the beach. There's a lot of worry and heartache and insomnia we can leave on the beach too, and we can leave it there today. Jesus is here, and the Kingdom waits—for you, and for us all.

May it be so, in Jesus' name, AMEN.