

The great catch of fish



Matthew 4:18–22 / Luke 5:1–11

The Lord Jesus was teaching in Galilee. The news of his activities spread to the neighbouring villages. One day a large crowd had gathered around him in Capernaum on the shore of Lake Gennesaret.

Jesus taught the people from a boat. When he had finished preaching, he instructed his disciples to go further out into the lake and cast in their nets. Although they had fished unsuccessfully all night, Simon Peter and his friends obeyed the Lord. They caught a great number of fish and experienced the power of their Master anew. Their trust in Jesus Christ was strengthened and this caused Peter and Andrew, James and John, to leave everything behind and follow him unconditionally.

The children recognize the Lord Jesus' great influence on the people.
They perceive that he has been given great power.
We also trustingly follow the Son of God.

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hroughout Galilee the people are speaking about the Lord Jesus. He performs miracles and preaches powerfully. He proclaims: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel!" He teaches the people. One day he is standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret in Capernaum. A great crowd has gathered as everyone wants to hear him speak. People have even come from neighbouring villages and no one wants to miss the Lord Jesus' sermon. As the crowd gets bigger and bigger, it almost pushes Jesus into the water. He sees two boats which have been pulled up on the beach. The fishermen have already left them and are washing their nets in the lake. One of these boats belongs to Simon Peter. His brother Andrew is also there. In another boat James and John are repairing their nets. Jesus gets into Simon Peter's boat and asks him to push off a little from the shore. He sits down in the boat, looks at the multitude of people and starts speaking to them from the boat. The people sit down on the shore and listen to him. Nathanael is also among them.

1

Jesus speaks for quite some time before he stops. The sun has

already risen fairly high in the sky and the people have become hungry. Jesus says to Simon: "Go further out into the lake and cast in your nets!" Simon looks at him in complete surprise. What is the Lord asking him to do? In broad daylight one cannot catch fish! He says to the Lord: "Master, we worked the whole night but caught nothing." Suddenly he remembers all the extraordinary things he has already experienced with his Master and quickly adds: "But if you say so, I will let down the nets."

2

He rows out to the middle of the lake and, together with his brother Andrew, lets down the net in the deep water. Can one really catch something at this time of day? But when he pulls on the net a little later, he notices that it has become quite heavy. Together with Andrew he tries to pull the net into the boat, but they cannot manage. The net is so full of fish that if they try to haul it in, it might tear. Excitedly, they call and signal to their companions in the other boat: "Come and help us haul in the net. We have made a tremendous catch!" James and John row up to them and together they haul the net out of the water. The fish wriggle and sparkle in the sun. The great catch fills both boats to the brim. The fishermen shake their heads in amazement and are almost shocked by this enormous catch.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God

And to think that during the night they had caught nothing at all!

3

Peter falls to his knees before his Master for he is deeply ashamed. If the Lord Jesus can see into the depths of the sea, how much more can he see the doubts which he, Simon, had in his heart. Is he still worthy to be with the Lord Jesus?

Helplessly he stutters: "Lord, can you still use me now? I am a sinful man." But the Lord Jesus turns to Simon and says kindly: "Don't be afraid, from now on you will be catching men."

4

The Lord Jesus also speaks to James and John: "Follow me, I want to make you fishers of men."

The disciples are still greatly impressed by what they have just experienced. They would like nothing more than to follow this great Master. For him they are prepared to leave everything: house, family, boats. They leave their work. The Lord has shown them their new task: Fishers of men! Gladly they want to help him bring the word of God to the people and lead them to the Lord. They have recognized the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and they want to dedicate their life to his service.



The Lord Jesus taught the people at Lake Gennesaret. On the instructions of the Son of God, the disciples rowed out into the lake and made a great catch of fish. Their faith was strengthened; they gave up their jobs, followed Jesus and dedicated their life to serving him. They became fishers of men.

- 1 We look at the picture on the left. With what can we compare this situation? (with a divine service).
- 2 We discuss Peter's reply. His faith and previous experiences with Jesus outweigh his human considerations.
- 3 What do the children think of this catch at a time of day when one normally would not catch anything? (Jesus, as the Son of God, also has power over nature. Childlike faith is rewarded.) How will Peter react?
- 4 Who are today's "fishers of men"? The apostles of Jesus dedicate their life to serving Jesus. We look at and discuss the picture on the right.