

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin
February 6, 2022 - The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Luke 5:1-11 -- One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ²He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. ⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Col. 3:16)

In the name of Jesus, who is the Word and became flesh and lived among us, dear fellow redeemed.

Words are powerful! Nathaniel Hawthorne, the early 19th Century American author said. "Words: So innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them." Perhaps as he wrote that sentence he had in mind a passage like this from the book of Proverbs: *"The words of the wicked live in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them." (Proverbs 12:6)*

In the Gospel lesson today we hear Jesus speak three times and we learn about the Power of Jesus' words. We learn that Jesus' words are worth listening to because they are awesome words. As we consider Jesus words wrapped around this amazing miracle of the catch of many fish we are urged to:

LISTEN TO JESUS' WORDS OF AMAZING POWER.

These amazing powerful words work 1) on our minds; 2) in our hearts; 3) and out of our mouths.

The amazing, powerful words of Jesus had worked on the minds of that crowd of people gathered around him on the sand of the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The previous chapter of Luke tells both Jesus' amazing miracles as well as his powerful words. That's why they had followed him to the sandy shore and pressed around him so tightly that he asked Peter for the use of Peter's fishing boat.

Peter also heard the powerful words of Jesus. He had heard Jesus' teaching prior to this and now Peter reacts to those powerful words. His intellect and fishing expertise screamed in his head "NO!" "Jesus, this is foolishness. I know that fishing in deep water with a net and during the day is a waste of time! After all, we just spent the night using all our skill and equipment and experience and we haven't caught a thing! Now you want me to go into the deep water in daylight! *"But because you say so, I will let down the nets."* The powerful words of Jesus worked on Peter's mind and he followed Jesus' instructions. What a surprise was in store for Peter and his fellow fishermen! So many fish filled their nets that not even two boats could hold them all. The powerful words of Jesus defied the knowledge and experience of these expert fishermen.

Jesus' powerful words work on our minds as well. We look at God's creation which surround us and we see the power of the words of the pre-incarnate Son of God. In the beginning of his Gospel the Apostle John calls Jesus "the Word" and says that the *"world was made through him."* Those powerful words *"let there be"* are impressive, amazing, powerful words. They show us the power of Jesus. His words of healing; his words of blessing on two fish and five small loaves which resulted in feeding 5,000 men plus women and children; his words to dead and buried Lazarus, *"Come Out!"*; his two simple words *"Be still!"* to the winds and the waves as the boat was being swamped; truly are amazing powerful words that work on our minds even today.

The words of Jesus to the disciples certainly worked on their minds for after Peter called for help and another boat to bring in the haul, Luke tells us that Peter *"and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, as were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners."*

We see that Jesus' amazing, powerful words work not only on our minds, but also in the hearts of those who listened to his words. *"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"* Jesus' words brought Peter to that stark reality that Jesus is holy and he was sinful, with no right to be in the presence of Jesus and his holiness. The terror of his guilt filled him with fear. Isaiah in the Old Testament lesson realized the same thing.

Can we? Dare we? React any differently to the powerful words of Jesus. He says, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:37, 39). We have failed to do that perfectly and because of our sin we must say with Peter, "I am a sinful person". The words of Jesus strike terror into our hearts as we comprehend what our sins do to our relationship with our holy God. Sin separates us from him. Sin condemns us to an eternity of suffering in hell.

But in the midst of our terror the words of Jesus sooth our shaking hearts. Jesus said to Peter, *"Don't be afraid."* He tells us the same. In a most amazing way Isaiah received peace in his heart. An angel touched his mouth with a fiery coal and said *"your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."* What tremendous words of peace and comfort Peter and Isaiah heard! How often do we hear Jesus say "Don't be afraid? Especially on the day of his resurrection and at the gatherings that followed, our risen Lord assured his disciples that he has removed all reason for followers to be afraid.

But not only Peter and Isaiah. When water was poured on your head and someone said, *"I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"* you were assured that you are a forgiven child of God with an eternal residence in the glories of heaven. When the devil tries to use the terrors of life in this sin-filled world to fill your hearts and minds with fear, remember Jesus' powerful, amazing words that we need not fear. Treasure this assurance in minds and hearts. Make it your confidence as you sleep and your strength as you go through all the activities of your daily lives. *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."* (Colossians 3:15)

We see here that the amazing, powerful words of Jesus work on our minds; in our hearts and that Jesus wants those words to come out of our mouths. Talking to Peter and his companions Jesus immediately followed "Don't be afraid" with *"from now on you will catch men."* That same connection is in the Old Testament lesson with Isaiah: when he was assured that his guilt was taken away and his sinned was atone for, the voice of the Lord asked him, *"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*

Notice the similar responses from Isaiah and Peter and his companions: Isaiah immediately says: *"Here am I. Send me."* Luke tell us that Peter and his companions *"pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."* Imagine that! The best payday they had ever experienced and they left it rotting in their nets and boats. They gave up their family-supporting work and the equipment they had worked so hard to maintain. They began their training so that the amazing, powerful words of Jesus would work through their mouths. After about three years of training, shortly before Jesus' visible presence left these disciples, he renewed his commission by telling them to teach the nations "to obey everything I have commanded you." That's exactly what they did. Luke also wrote the Act of the Apostles and records the work of the early Church of sharing the words of Jesus around the Mediterranean. Since that time the followers of Christ have continued to share the words of Jesus with the world around them.

When we look at the world we live in, we can't help to come to the conclusion that the commission of Jesus is every bit as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago on the sand of the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Billions of people today know the fear of the lack of the holiness which God demands. But they have no peace in their hearts. The words and works of Jesus need to work on their minds and in their hearts. Our Lord amazingly uses us poor sinners to be his ambassadors, to bring his message to lonely, fearful, lost souls. Having received the comfort and fear-removing words of Jesus he commissions us to *"Catch men."* He wants us to say with Isaiah, *"Here am I. Send me."*

We prepare to do that by continuing to listen to and learn from his words. We carry out his commission by watching for opportunities to speak about Jesus with family and friends, with co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances. We can encourage our young people to consider rearing to serve our Lord as Christian teachers and staff ministers, as pastors and missionaries.

Listen to Jesus' words of amazing power. They work on our minds; in our hearts; and through our mouths.

Amen.

The peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.