

Chapter 18

An unexpected blessing

Luke 5 vv. 1 - 11.

There was a great deal of talk in Galilee about the new prophet from Nazareth, and in the hearts of thousands of Galileans, both men and women, this thought came uppermost - "I would like to hear him too."

They get ready and make their way to the place where the Lord Jesus is. In this way it comes about that Jesus is daily surrounded by great multitudes of people. The hearers come to Him hoping that a miracle of some kind will take place, but also to hear Him speak, for they gladly listened to the preaching of Jesus. He spoke in such a different way from the Scribes and Pharisees. They just had to listen to Him.

He spoke so plainly. Everyone could understand Him.

One day the Lord Jesus is walking by the Lake of Gennesaret. It is in the morning. Two ships lie on the shore. They have only returned home a short while from fishing. It has not been a great catch - no indeed. The boats are empty.

The fishermen from one ship have stepped from their boat and are now washing their nets in the shallow water. The fishermen in the other ship throw their net into the sea.

We know the men who are washing their nets. They are Andrew and Simon Peter, two of the disciples of the Lord Jesus. Since Jesus, their Master, is in Capernaum, they are at home, and have gone fishing once more.

Jesus walks peacefully along.

He is not long left in peace however, for soon after crowds come to Him from Capernaum and from the other cities and towns of the district. They have heard where He is and now they are looking for Him. More and more join them. Soon the place teems with people.

Those at the back crane their necks and try to push their way to the front, so as to miss nothing of what will be said. They are afraid that they will not be able to understand Him properly and so they press forward. Yes, they press so strongly that those in front are almost crushed against the Lord Jesus. He cannot speak like that; the people are far too closely packed around Him.

So He steps into the ship of Peter and Andrew and asks them to push out a little from the shore. They obey at once.

There, now Jesus stands clear in the ship. Now they cannot get too close to Him. Probably He beckoned to the people to sit down.

When at last it becomes quiet and the thronging ceases, He too sits down and teaches the multitude, out of the ship. We would say: "He preaches".

What He said then we do not know. God's Word is silent about that.

Neither do we know how long He spoke. Certainly, however, the many listeners heard His words with wrapt attention.

At length the Lord Jesus leaves off speaking, the people go away and disperse.

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Then Jesus says to Peter and Andrew: "Launch out now into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught".

The two men do not really want to go out again. No wonder. They have only just come home. They have been working all night. But all their work has been in vain. Not one little fish have they caught in their nets. At last they had given up and had come back sad and disappointed. What fisherman comes home gladly without catching a fish? Not one, surely? ...

And now Jesus tells them to start again. No, they are not keen on the idea, but they dare not refuse.

Peter says: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

Night time is the best time for fishing. They had fished the whole night and caught nothing, will they then catch anything in the middle of the day? Oh, it really seems rather foolish.

But, because Jesus, their Master bids them, they will do it - for He is the Almighty! Shall He bid them do it, and put them to shame? ... No they cannot believe that, and that is why they obey. Deep in their hearts there is a quiet hope that this time they will catch something.

This hope is not disappointed, for when they try to pull in the net, it is so full that they can scarcely manage it. They try hard, but then the net begins to break.

No, that won't do, for all the fish will escape through the opening, and that is not what is intended.

They beckon to the fishermen in the other ship to come and help them. At once that

ship goes to meet them and together with united forces, they haul the net aboard and empty it.

It then appears that there are so many fish that one ship cannot carry the whole catch. The remainder are put for the time being into the hold of the second ship. That too is completely filled. Yes, both ships are so full that they almost sink.

What a blessing, what a rich blessing.

Peter looks on in amazement. Yes, he feels embarrassed about it. He really does not deserve this.

Look, he falls on his knees before the Lord Jesus and cries out in adoration: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He judges himself unworthy of this unexpected blessing.

Have you ever known that, boys and girls? Has the Lord at any time so blessed you, that you have felt shy or embarrassed? Or has that never come into your heart? Do you deserve God's care and daily protection? ... No, No! We have sinned it all away. We are not worthy of the Lord's care for us.

May you one day be truly overcome with the Lord's blessings. If that happens, then all the glory will be to God also.

The Lord Jesus knows what is going on in Peter's heart. That is why He says: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

O, but what does the Lord mean by that? ... Well, Peter and the other fishermen too are not to continue in that work any longer. No, they shall become preachers and God will bless that preaching, so that men will be converted by that means. They shall catch men through the Gospel.

Look, the two ships move very carefully

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to the shore. They have to go very carefully for they are so low in the water that the slightest rocking motion would make them sink.

They bring the ships to land, then leave all, and follow Jesus.