

Lutheran Vespers, Sometime during 1947-1948
Recording #1
KVNU, 610, Logan, Utah
Rev. Harold Brauer, speaker

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied unto you from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God upon which we wish to meditate today is recorded in the Gospel according to Saint Luke, chapter 5, reading verses 4 and 5 as follows:

Now when Jesus had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing, nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.

This is our text.

Dear Christian friends. Our text is the heart and center of our today's Gospel reading. In that story, Jesus used Simon Peter's fishing boat for a pulpit. From that pulpit Jesus spoke to a large crowd of people gathered before Him on the shore. This crowd of people was somewhat different from some of the other crowds who came to Jesus. In this case, it was not the desire to see him. This time who gathered around came rather for the blessed purpose to hear the Word of God. This is to be said to their credit.

We have no record, however, of the contents of this sermon by the sea. But no doubt some parable from the scene that was before him, some tender appeal, some solemn warning, some far-reaching and impressive enforcement of a spiritual principal, we are not told what, was the burden of the Lord's discourse. But whatever it was, we are sure it would gather in upon Him the eager attention of his listeners, while the fisherman by his side, forgetting their nets for the time, would drink in his Words with delight, for the common people always heard Jesus gladly.

When the sermon was ended, the Lord turned from the multitude and singled out Peter and very likely his companions, too, for a special and private lesson. The time had come when these men who were chosen to carry the Savior's Gospel throughout the world should again see and feel something of His divine power and majesty for the strengthening of their faith in Him as their Lord and Savior. So we see these men at the Lord's command launching out into the deep, letting down their nets and then closing a catch of fish so large that they filled both boats so they were at the point of sinking. This miracle of the catch of fishes is so familiar that further comment here is not necessary.

We wish this morning, however, to direct our attention on the Lord's command to Peter: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." This command is really a challenge to Peter's faith in the Lord. Ordinarily, it was the wrong time to fish. "Master," we hear Peter saying, "we have toiled all the night" which was the best time "and have taken nothing." The deep was ordinarily the wrong place to fish, too. Thus,

Jesus' command ran counter to the best practical knowledge of these veteran fisherman, Peter and his companions.

But in time they were to learn as they accompanied Jesus in His blessed ministry up and down the land of Palestine, that His directions and commands were often contrary to what we ordinarily expect. So it was that out on a grassy plain far removed from the city, he once instructed his disciples to feed 5000 men, beside the women and children, with the little boy's five barley loaves and two small fishes.

On another occasion, He directed Peter to go to sea, cast the hook and take out of the mouth of the first fish caught a piece of money. Then again, these men stood with Him before the grave of Lazarus and heard Him command this dead disciple, "Lazarus, come forth."

We see then that the Lord's command, like his doctrines and his dealings with men are very often contrary to human expectation. They are really challenges to His disciples' faith in Him, in His power and in His love. This a lesson we disciples cannot learn too well. So the Master comes among us too, in our everyday lives, and bids us "Let down your net for a draught." It is as much as if He said to us, No matter how things look to you, trust Me, depend on My Word."

Our Lord has given us a great work to do. In a sense, we too are fishermen with those first disciples. We are fishers of men. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men" said Jesus to Peter, yet not only to Peter, but to all His followers of all time.

Though he challenges us today to let down our net in church work, particularly in the spreading of the gospel. Really we can never claim that the time is wrong no matter what conditions in the world at large may be. In fact, the present is a most favorable time. Nor can we ever say that anyplace is wrong. With people everywhere without the saving knowledge of Jesus, we can let down the Gospel net almost anywhere and reach benighted souls. With a time and place so favorable for carrying out our Lord's command, can we still refer to His command as a challenge to our faith. Yes, we can. For it is a challenge to believe Him that in spite of the other things that may challenge for our attention, we can and should give our attention to Jesus.

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Trust Me, depend on My word and everything I have given you is the work of extending my kingdom on earth and in your everyday lives. Thus, the Lord challenges the faith of His disciples today. Friends, what shall be our answer to this challenge of our Lord? Peter's answer was "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." That was a simple statement of facts as they stood. Nevertheless, we hear him continue, "According to Thy word, I will let down the net." That was the answer of faith to the Lord's challenge. All outward circumstances to the contrary, Peter's faith still found room for it nevertheless, when the Lord spoke. Had anyone else as much as hinted to Peter what the Lord here commanded him to do, Peter with his characteristic

impulsiveness, would undoubtedly have sent that person promptly on his way. But to Jesus words, he replied: "At Thy Word, I will let down the net."

Why should Jesus' Word make any difference to Peter as a one-time disciple of John the Baptist. Peter had heard that desert preacher refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. After this, Peter, together with John, had followed Jesus and spent a blessed day with Him listening to His teaching.

Peter had also been among the guests at that wedding in Cana and had seen the Lord turn water into wine. No doubt he had witnessed other of the Lord's miracles. Then after being with Jesus for a short while, Peter had gone back to his fishing for he had not yet been permanently called. But he had not forgotten his early experiences with the Lord. This explains why Peter after a night of unsuccessful fishing could answer the Lord's challenge as he did, saying: "Nevertheless, at Thy word, I will let down the net."

You see his obedience was based on a knowledge of the person and the power of the One who was directing him. And that is something you and I as believers today have in common with that fisherman of Galilee. Also your faith in the Lord rests upon a knowledge of the person and work of Him.

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But much more than that he (Peter) would have denied himself that glorious display of Jesus as the Almighty Lord and the resultant strengthening of his faith in Him. Beside, Peter would have missed a wonderful revelation of his own inner self. Overcome by the miracle itself and also by the revelation of the divine character of the one who performed it, Peter threw himself on his knees, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter was convinced by this miracle that he was altogether unworthy to stand in the Lord's presence. But the Lord understood Peter and it was at this moment when Peter acknowledged himself to be a sinner that the Lord raised him up to the highest calling, namely to be his permanent companion. Yet had Peter refused to obey the Lord's command, he would not have known this blessed experience on the sea. And so powerful was the effect of this experience that we read: "When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him."

What blessings you and I as disciples of Jesus often miss because we neglect to trust our Lord to take Him at his Word, we cannot estimate. But this much is clear, if we set up ourselves as final judges as to what He can and what He cannot do for us, instead of confidently accepting His challenges to our faith, and boldly living by His unfailing promises, then we truly set ourselves up in a small and miserable world. We deny ourselves those heavenly riches that come only with growth in Christian faith and life and we deprive others of the blessings that He wants to give to them through us. There can be no true happiness, if we follow this course. Our Lord has shown us another way, when He says: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall

know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” Friends, every day of your life, that Lord who redeemed you, comes to you with his challenge, “Let down your net.” Your answer must be: “According to Thy Word, I will let down the net.” Thee, oh Lord, will I trust in everything. May God graciously give each and every one of us the power so to do for Jesus sake. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.