

Meditation on Luke 5: 1-11 **Jesus calls the first disciples**

In this story from the gospel of Luke Jesus calls his very first disciples. At this point Jesus is beginning his public ministry. He has overcome the temptation in the desert, he has been rejected in his home town of Nazareth, and so he travels around the towns and villages sharing a very new message of good news. The disciples weren't the disciples yet, they were just fishermen... All the things Jesus had done up to now, he'd done on his own. But from now on friends will be with him, companions, supporters...

Today God has called you (names of new members...) into our church family. And he's called all of us into church and to this service. We welcome new members, we greet old friends, we celebrate the family of God into which we are growing together, and we share bread and wine. We sing and pray and share stories from the Bible.

Our story about the first disciples is in the first place a story of trust. This is something, we all have to admit, that doesn't always come easily. Trust. For many of us this is a topic that we find hard to deal with. And for many of us it is even easier to mistrust, than to trust. But, it is a fact: without trust we cannot really succeed in life. Can we? It is trust, our ability to trust, that I would like to reflect upon with you as we look at this passage from Luke chapter 5.

Luke tells us how Jesus called the first disciples. And I must say, I regard the end of the story as the most important part of it: The fishermen left everything and followed him (v11). This is a report of the first apostles starting to follow Jesus. An important part of the faith story for Peter and the early church in Jerusalem. It helped Jesus' disciples to remember that following Jesus had a lot to do with simply trusting in Jesus. This is what the early Christians did, and it is fascinating to read in the book of Acts how much strength, courage and perseverance they got from of this.

The individual elements of our story touch us of course, because they could just as well be taken from our own life stories: elements like the worries, joys, hopes and fears of those fishermen. They'd been fishing all night, and had caught nothing. Discouraged they must have thought that they might as well go home. It just wasn't their day.

But: disappointment is part of life, part of our faith even. The fishermen were discouraged by their disappointing experience. And so would we be. We often don't easily overcome disappointment. We question and worry...

What was it that we did wrong?

What was missing?

What could I have done differently? Better?

It makes me despair when I know that I've done my best, and still the outcome is as frustrating as the empty fishing nets in our story.

I can only imagine what the fishermen must have thought when Jesus said to them: Put out into the deep water & let down your nets for a catch.

What a waste of time?

Honestly!?

They were the professionals.

They knew exactly that the right time for fishing was in the night.

Fishing at daytime was no good... it was even silly.

What Jesus asked them to do was not only unusual.

It was really daft and against all logic and experience.

Mind you: this is something that would challenge us a lot.

Living in the 21st century and being brought up in a world in which almost everything is controllable, we have to admit, we'd find it awfully hard to just trust and believe – and do something that sounded so silly...

Nevertheless: the disciples (all experienced fishermen) dared to trust and believe in the unpredictable.

They took the risk of faith. Only because they believed in Jesus' words. Only because they believed that what he said might be true.

True words, not just a silly idea...

They took the risk.

They took the first steps.

They took a leap in the dark, trusting only that wherever they landed, God would be already expecting and holding them. No matter what.

What gave them assurance must have been their trust...

and only then could they see the chances and opportunities.

Only then could they see hidden resources and undiscovered skills – talents and gifts they hadn't known they had.

It all only happened through the challenge Jesus gave this men.

He urged them to trust.

He suggested they would take the risk.

Regardless of what reality had taught them...

And then they all learned that once you step beyond the mere facts of reality, you can have new experiences and widen your horizon beyond what you could ever have imagined...

Yet if you say so, Peter speaks for all of them, I will let down the nets.

They did it...

And then they must have experienced one of the greatest days of their lives.

What an amazing thing to happen.

They would have a great story to tell!

And on top of that they truly found “their saviour”, the person who would from now on make all the difference in their lives.

And what did Peter do?

He fell down on his knees and expressed his fear.

And Jesus only told them, not to be afraid, but to come with him and be fishers of men – be catching people the NRSV translation says. You will love and serve as God’s people in this world.

And this is what he tells us, too.

Do not be afraid.

Come now with me and heal and preach and make people free.

I am not going to suggest what the nets and boats are that you may have to leave behind to start and follow something new.

But I am suggesting that we all try to learn a lesson
of trust and letting go,
of leaving the comfortable for the unfamiliar,
and follow God’s call,
not all alone as an individual,
but as a member of the worldwide family of God
that can change the world
and help God’s miracles come true.
Amen.