

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 January 2025

Preachers: James Tang, Jae Won Kim

[0:00] So last week, we've been going through the book of Luke since the beginning of December, and last week Jesus announces his arrival. He says, I'm about to begin. He goes up to church, he stands, he unscrolls, and then he reads and then he drops the mic. And he's like, I am him. Today it begins.

And what starts off as a really heartwarming time at church ends up with everyone turning against him and trying to get him out and throw him off a cliff. And so that's kind of where we stopped right there. And he managed to slip away because it's not his time and he's the son of God and he can do whatever he wants.

And then so he announces his start and now he actually starts. And what does he do when he starts? He recruits his team. He assembles his Avengers.

And it's interesting here because as he assembles this team, he does it in the most peculiar way. And actually, later in Luke chapter 6, we see actually Jesus goes away all night. He does an all-night prayer session before he recruits his 12.

Now, many of you here are in the corporate world and even I've had the privilege of hiring people on the team. And actually, I looked at that and I was like, wow, before he brought people onto his team, he prayed all night.

[1:14] Even Jesus, who knew everything, prayed all night, relied on the Holy Spirit to guide him. And then once he comes out from that all-night prayer session, he then starts to hire. He starts to recruit these 12 people in.

The amount of thought he puts into it, the amount of reliance on the Holy Spirit he has. And so if we rewind just back to chapter 5, he starts to go, he's paving the way for this and he reaches out to his first one. And he reaches out to Peter.

And what happens here, actually, it's interesting. Chapter 5, so if you're following me, we're just going to be going through from 1 to 11 today. On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Genesera.

And so the crowd are pressing in. So if you imagine, there's no seats. So they're pressing in on him and they're going, teachers, you have the words of life. There's something different about this teacher, about this rabbi.

We want to hear. And so they're pressing in. Can you just imagine that hunger that they had? But there's something different about this person. And they gather and it's crowded. But the only difference is, actually, I forgot to mention this last week.

[2:11] When he did that mic drop in the synagogue, he sat down to preach. When he said, today, this shall be fulfilled. Actually, in those days in the synagogue, everyone else is standing.

Everyone else is. Can you just imagine however long they're preaching for? They're all standing. So actually, the roles are reversed here. As a teacher, I would be sitting and all of you would be standing. So it would be impossible for you to see me in a setting like this. But can you, and I was like, I was just pondering that for a second.

How the tables have turned today. I can imagine if you're willing to go into a church service and stand for the whole time, like those guys are doing over there. The devotion you have, the hunger that you have, that is so different from the other way around, where actually often now we've turned into a place where you guys sit, cross your arms, or play with your phones, and I try and entertain you and keep you entertained and keep you awake.

And I was like, that is so different. Those guys were pressing in on the rabbi. They were standing, and they were just desperate to hear these words of life and just how things have changed.

But here we are. And so here he sits down. So he's like, okay, there's too many people here. So then there were fishermen who had gone out of them and were washing their nets, because they'd spent all night trying to fish. And so he gets into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and he asked him to put out a little from the land.

[3:30] This is verse 3. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. So he sits down, and now he has a bit of distance from these people. So he starts to teach. And once he's finished teaching, he then does the attention grabber.

This is the post-sermon miracle that sadly you guys won't get today. So he finishes teaching, and once he's finished, he says this, Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. This is one of the first miracles that he chooses to do that is accompanied with his teaching. And it made me really think about miracles. And, of course, we know that he does many miracles. But I wondered actually why he chooses this miracle and why he does it now.

Have a think about the miracles that, you know, if you've grown up in the church and you're familiar with the Jesus story, then what are the miracles that you've thought in your mind? Actually, what's your favorite miracle? I just mentioned you, Paul. Welcome back.

Welcome to you and Mel back with Baby Zoe. Can we give you a round of applause? They made it. She's adorable. Looks nothing like Paul. Paul, what's your favorite miracle of Jesus'?

[4:34] Healing the leper. Just if you understood the context of that, if you understood what he was willing to do and what he was able to do, that's just earth shattering for the leper and for those around.

That's an awesome one. Other miracles that are our favorites. Hank, why don't you share with us, what's your favorite miracle of Jesus? Turning water into wine. Turning water into wine. Oh, I see. I see, Hank. Likes the wine. Likes the wine. Good, good. That's another one. What other miracles do we know? Johnny, what's your favorite miracle? Raising Lazarus from the death.

Raising Lazarus from the dead. Just stands. He weeps. He's sad. And then he's like, I'm going to do something about it. And I'm going to defy the law of nature.

And I'm going to bring this person back to life. One more. One more. I'm going to shoot over here so everyone can shirk here. Ellie, what's your favorite miracle? The woman with the issue of blood.

The woman with the issue of blood just touches his cloak.

[5:34] And he feels the power go from him. I want to ask another question, which is why does Jesus do these miracles anyway? What's the point of him doing these miracles?

What's he trying to show here? What do we think? What do we actually think he's actually trying to show here? Nathan, you got any thoughts? Just because.

Just because. I think there's truth to that. And he actually talks about this. He talks about people who are crowding around him saying, I want to see these miracles.

And he's like, look, it's not really about the miracle itself. It's not about the fish. It's not about the healing. It's not about the wine. Though the wine is good and it gets better and better. It's about something else. It's the fact that I can.

That actually what he's doing is he's revealing that there is a deeper reality that surrounds us. That there is a cosmic battle that he has authority over. If I was to put it simply, he's saying there is more to what there is in this world.

[6:41] There is more than meets the eye. And then he's also saying, and I am more than that. If you talk about Ephesians 6 and the realm of spiritual warfare, he's saying, hey, there is a cosmic battle that you can't see.

And I'm here to say that I am even over that. And even the wind and the waves obey me. I can turn someone from dead back to life again. He's saying there is just so much more than we actually have realized.

And then for this one, specifically for this one, he says, hey, go and catch some fish. What he's doing is he's turning this miracle and he's using it as a springboard to really call Peter into ministry, which I find fascinating.

And it actually reminded me a lot of my own journey. And this is what later on I'm going to bring Jay up because this passage has been speaking to him as well. And actually, he's going to help us land the plane. And actually, how does this story, how does this account apply to us?

But I want to kind of go through a few things. The first thing is Peter's recruitment. So Jesus goes to Peter and recruits Peter. But just just so you know, this was already abnormal.

[7:39] If you think about that time where rabbis had people who were following them, who were learning at their feet, it was kind of like getting into Bramer Hill Primary School here.

It's kind of like getting into HKIS. It's kind of like getting into Stanford. It's kind of like you need to have the best CV to be able to follow that rabbi. So it was a dogfight to be able to follow these famous ones.

So you can imagine if it was a Hong Kong parent. They're like, wait, I know someone who knows someone who knows Nicodemus. Why don't we go and hang out in the area that Nicodemus is at? And hey, son, can you prove to Nicodemus how good you are at reciting the Torah? Show him how you can do it backwards. Prove to him that you are Ivy League.

You are good to go. And so all these top rabbis would recruit the top students. And these top students would basically go into an intern program and hang out with these rabbis for years and just follow them because they knew that this was it.

[8:38] This was a sacred rabbi. This was this is how I get my education. This is how I get my fame. This is how I get the acclaim. Jesus does something very different. He recruits not really the Avengers.

If anything, it's a little bit more like the Suicide Squad. He's got the tax collectors. He's got the fishermen. And he's already doing something different. And you can imagine, Gamaliel, you can imagine Nicodemus looking over and going, well, actually, Nicodemus is like, something's different about this guy.

Why is he recruiting those people? There's something different there. Jesus just thinks different, operates different, and he recruits differently.

And something else is interesting here. He goes and recruits him in the place that Peter is the most familiar himself. He goes to where Peter is at. Now, back in those days, you'd be waiting in the temple.

The rabbi would be sat there and people would just be flocking towards them. Yet this rabbi, this one's different. He goes to them. He goes to them and he recruits them in and he calls them in. And these are the ragtag of society.

[9:41] Something else about this, one, it's abnormal. Two, there is just abundance. He says, Peter, put down the nets. And Peter, we'll talk a little bit more about Peter's response later. But he's like, okay, well, hey, I'm going to do it. It's not going to work.

He throws it out and suddenly what does he get? Just nets of fish. So full of fish that he gets his mates to bring their boat. So now you have two boats and both boats are nearly going to sink. What's he showing there? Of course, he's showing that, yes, he just can. He's God and he can do whatever he wants. But he's also showing the sign that actually when you follow him, there is just abundance.

There is just abundance. It's that song that we sang. There is just more than enough. You look at the Old Testament. You look at Moses in the time of Moses and the manna that was falling from the sky. You look at Elijah and Elisha with the jar of oil and with, you just see just abundance that it will never go.

Again, what he's showing here is that I just can, that I defy the laws of nature right here and that I can do whatever I want. And if you follow me, you will always, always have enough. It reminds me as I was thinking about my call into ministry.

[10:44] And honestly, it's the same thing every time for most people who go into ministry. What if I quit this job? How am I getting the income I need? We have a family now. How are we going to do this? And time and time again, time and time again, God's just saying, it's not even about that.

It's not about whether you think you have enough because I will give you more than enough. It's Philippians 4 where he says, and my God will supply every need of yours according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Paul in prison is like, I am well supplied. I am good. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me in any and every circumstance. I am content because God gives me enough.

There is an abundance when you follow. It reminds me of actually the Lord came to me in my context when we had just had Reuben. And many of you have heard the story about us going into ministry. I was a biology teacher in England and I loved teaching.

I loved being in school and that was my dream job because it was in the school that I had grown up in myself. So it was amazing. And of course, I looked even younger back then. So when I walked

back into the staff room, teachers would look at me and go, what are you doing in here?
[11:49] And then my voice would suddenly get really high, even higher than it is now. Sorry, sir, I'm actually working here now. I'm like, really? It's been that long? And so I was in the, but when we'd had Reuben, both Christina and I felt this call of God and Christina was working in the hospital as a cardiac physiologist.

So I had married up like several leagues and she had felt the call of God and I had felt the call of God. I remember one day I was just driving to work and in England, it's a 30 minute drive to anywhere.

I was driving. I was like, God, but why would I do this? I've already got the best job, my dream job. And I'm able to serve God in my summer holidays and my weekends. I've just got a great setup here. Why would I do this?

And then I started actually God asking me, well, why are you afraid? And Francis was with me during this time. I used to teach and on my lunch break, go out and meet Francis when he was a university student, not studying.

And we'd go and we'd play FIFA and we'd take him to KFC. And then when I had to go back to teach, he would go back, I'd drop him back off in his dorm and he'd just carry on sleeping. And I was like, why would I?

[12:54] God, I'm living all out for you now with my job. So I felt God asked me, well, why are you so afraid? What are you afraid of? Well, I've got a kid. I've got a kid now. If I give up my job, then how?

Who do you think gave you your kid? And if I'm calling you to this, do you not think that I'll provide for you and your kid? And I remember that I was driving and there was this just one song that came on, Chris Tomlin, Whom Shall I Fear?

Actually, it's not one of my favorite songs. And I've listened to it now and I feel nothing. It's just a heart of stone. But that day when I was driving, it's like, I know who goes before me. And God's like, do you know I'm already there?

I'm already there and I'm waiting for you. And I just burst into tears whilst driving. And then actually it was 50-50 whether I could even make it to school alive. Because my tears were just rolling down my face as I was driving.

It was incredibly dangerous. And I remember getting to school, you know, I'm just one of those people. If we have to do it, then we just do it. So I parked the car and I just walked straight into the headmaster's office.

[13:58] And I was like, hey, I feel like I need to finish teaching this academic year and go into ministry. But actually, I was wondering, are there any part-time opportunities? Can we figure this out?

Where actually I can go swimming, but maybe with a big float. And then he says to me, he said, James, you're either called or you're not. There's no semi-called.

And I was like, ouch. And yet each time, each time, God just reminds me. I think of another time when I was doing my lesson planning.

One of my favorite places to do lesson planning is in a place, a very respected establishment in England called Wetherspoons. Have you heard of Wetherspoons? Spoons, yeah.

But it's a pub. It's a pub. And I'm sat there and I'm doing my lesson planning. And then I was just listening again to worship music. And again, this song comes on. And it's called I'm Not Finished Yet.

[14:54] And it's saying, hey, I've been faithful to you at every turn. Why would I stop now? And I burst into tears again on this Tuesday morning in a pub, which actually isn't uncommon.

And then I remember calling Christine. I was like, I think this is it. I think we're done. We have to go. It's either this or we'll get eaten by a fish.

It's going to happen. Just you choose. You choose. But at every turn, at every turn, he's given more than we've needed.

And then we come to Hong Kong. We didn't even realize how expensive things were here. And yet at every turn, God just keeps giving. When you choose to follow him, there is an abundance. When you choose to listen to him, there is an abundance.

And so Peter goes on this journey. And Jay's going to talk a little bit more about this journey. Because he starts as really just a hearer. He hears the hype. There's this rabbi. There's this guy.

That's doing crazy things.

[15:53] So he's intrigued. And then later, actually, we actually skipped it. In the end of chapter 4, he not only just hears things, he actually observes and he sees. What does he see? He sees Jesus heal his mother-in-law.

And that would have been like crazy. I'm guessing that was good news to him, maybe. And so he sees him heal his mother-in-law.

And he's like, oh, okay. And then, of course, now he's fishing. He's fishing all night. He's not been successful. And then Jesus chooses his boat. And then he goes from hearer to observer and then to believer. Because Jesus says, okay, right, do this.

And he does it. And he takes him at his word. And then finally, once he realizes who he's dealing with, he becomes a follower. And you see it every journey, he's being reinvented.

Actually, the story here, before this story happens, he's Simon. He's Simon Peter. After this story, he becomes Peter. There is this journey of reinvention that is happening for Peter.

[16:49] And I think, and I hope, for all of us as well. So then we hear about his response. Verse 5, he says this. And Simon answers, okay, Jesus tells him in verse 4, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And then Peter thinks to himself, what an idiot. No, it doesn't actually say that. I just made that up. Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. He's like, what do you know?

I am a fisherman and you are a carpenter. I know what's up. Actually, I'm washing the nets now and it's done. We've had a whole night and it's been a waste. But at your word, I'll do as you say.

And see, I think we are Peter to many degrees. We are Peter because we're like, what do you know? Jesus, you're cool. You're good. 2,000 years ago, you rocked the world. But what do you know about living in Hong Kong right now?

You don't know what it's like in my office. You don't know what it's like how I need to defend myself when I'm at the coffee machine, when people are talking about it, Mavi. You don't know what it's like trying to get success in the industry that I'm in.

[17:51] What do you know? And so Jesus comes to this area of familiarity that Peter is in, that he has pride in, and he challenges it. And he's saying, will you listen to me?

And then Peter, of course, goes, but at your word, I will let down the nets. I wonder whether sometimes we are that Peter. We've tried everything.

He's tried all night. I wonder whether sometimes we have tried everything. Last time I said, actually, there's no such thing as a good Christian. And sometimes some of us strive so hard to become the Christian that we need to be, or rather to become the person that we need to be.

And we think coming to church will help that. Okay, if we come to church, we'll feel like a good person. And then maybe we attend a Bible study, and then we'll start reading the word, and then we'll just become better and better. But we try and do all these things, and then we try and surround ourselves with the friends, and then we try and do the best that we can in our careers.

And yet somehow none of these things work. And I wonder whether there is an element of that Peter spirit inside us, where we've been trying, trying, trying, trying.

[18:52] And yet here what we see, what begins his transformation, is him going, okay, I don't really understand or agree with what you're telling me to do, but I'm going to do it anyway.

At your word, at your word, I will do this. And verse six says this, and when they had done this, they enclosed the large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They were astonished. They were shocked, because Peter knows, hey, this isn't normal.

Guys, we've been fishing all of our lives. This is not normal. This is the biggest catch we've ever, ever had. And then he has a huge response. And actually, there is a parallel account to this in John chapter 21, where it's the same thing.

And Peter again has a big response. And that time, when he realizes what's happened, he jumps out the water, and he runs towards Jesus. And this time, though, this first time, he falls at his feet. I find that actually very interesting.

And so this is what he says, verse eight. Once he realizes what has happened, and both their boats are sinking, but when Simon Peter saw it, verse eight, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

[20:02] I think this is a little bit of a twist in the story, because I'm like, oh, that's interesting. He's just got the biggest catch in his life. There should be just joy. He's like, I don't have to work for

another few weeks now. Can you imagine us hauling this to the market?

It's going to be a good time. Let's go on holiday. And yet he falls at his feet. And I think this is really what the journey of our Christian faith should be like.

That first response, that first time we encounter the Lord, should be one of just almost dismay. The closer you get to God, the first thing you should feel is the further, how far you feel away from him. Maybe you, maybe some of us have been in church forever, and we've now just become kind of just routine, lukewarm Christians. So maybe we've just numb to all of it. But for those of you who have maybe grown outside of the church, grown up outside of the church, and then do you remember that first time you walk into the church, and you're like, oh, I feel like a sinner.

I hope they don't see what I've done in my past. I'm not worthy to be in this room. That's a little glimpse of really what Peter sees here.

[21:08] Because he realizes who God is, and the first thing he realizes, as close as he is to God now, is how far away he is. Every time I see Godfrey, and I stand next to Godfrey, I'm reminded how small I am.

Honestly, he's just abnormally tall for a Chinese person. And honestly, every time, it just shocks me. I get a neck strain, and I'm like, whoa, I feel so small.

Every time I stand next to Uday, I can't stop looking at his chest. I'm like, I don't have that kind of chest. What substances must one intake to have that kind of chest?

Have you been around that kind of person, where they just make you feel this small? When I stand next to someone with just a head full of hair, I'm like, oh, man. If only.

If only. I would use that hair so much better than you. No, I don't. But have you been around those people that just make you feel this small because of who they are? When you stand next to someone who excels in your field.

[22:24] I don't know if you're a banker, and you go and meet a world-famous banker. I don't know if this is a terrible example. And you're like, oh, he knows. She's way better than I.

And then you feel this small. I think, imagine that, but a million times more with Christ. That when he walks into the room, you just want to find a place to hide.

Because he's that glorious. And often I think we've minimized God into something else. Minimize him into a genie that we put in our back pockets. Hey, Jesus, I need to whip you out.

Because that jerk at work is causing me grief. Or Jesus, I need to talk to you. Because I've got a loved one who's going through some kind of health scare. Can you come out now and do your little thing?

Oh, done, put you back in. I'm so comfortable being around you. Well, actually, that's not consistent with what the people in the Bible do when they encounter Jesus. You look at Abraham.

[23:22] In Genesis 18, he gets to talk to God. And what does he say? I am dust and ashes. Like, I have no business being here. And Job, this story, this whole journey that he's on, at the end in chapter 42, he says, I repent from dust and ashes.

In Exodus 33, God says, no, they can't look at me. Because if they look at me, they will what? They will die. You see this reverence, this fear of God that I think we have completely lost.

Isaiah, the great prophet Isaiah in chapter 6, when he meets God, he's like, woe is me. I am ruined. I have unclean lips. The first moment you meet Christ, that moment actually doesn't feel that nice.

It isn't the warm and fuzzy feeling that some people tell you. Because when you meet the living Christ in all his holiness, in that bright light, actually the first thing you'll feel is just pain and shame. No matter how far short am I. And yet that isn't the end of it. And so that's what really Peter is going through here. But what we do love is what he does after that.

[24:29] He falls to his knees. And out of humility, he's like, get away from me, God. You shouldn't be anywhere near me. I shouldn't be anywhere near you. That's the humility that starts.

So I want you to think about your first journey when you came to Christ. What was it? Was it I have arrived? Oh, this was the best. This was all made for me. This was perfect for me. And now I feel finally that I have my...

It's not about you. Or maybe the Christ or the God that you've met is just a reduced version. When if you meet the real one, it is much more terrifying.

But the good thing is that bright light that shines, that blinds you from the beginning, you realize that isn't out to hurt you. But it's actually here to bring light into your life and actually to bring healing into your life and to be able to restore you.

Just like how we use lights to get rid of things that we don't want in the medical sense. This is cleansing. This is purifying. And so what we see here, then, Peter displays the only real entry requirement that's needed when you come into the kingdom of heaven, humility.

[25:34] And so I wonder whether we walk in here with our chests held high because we think we deserve to be here, or whether we actually truly realize that we have no business being here. And as we sit in our comfy seats, or maybe less than comfy stools, we realize, actually, there is something far greater that I'm here for.

I'm gathering here for a much bigger purpose than just me feeling better about myself. There is something much, much bigger. Would we humble ourselves like Peter? And then after that, after being a believer, he then commits to following.

In verse 11, And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. This is the drastic one that I think a lot of us struggle to do.

To actually genuinely follow him. In Chinese, a lot of us stay in the suntou stage. Oh, I believe him. I believe he exists. I believe he's a good guy. I believe he loves me.

But we never move to the muntou, the follower. The question is, God says, believe in me and you won't perish. But then he really says, follow me. And then, again, when he's recruiting, he's not saying, hey, believe me, become a Christian, come to church on Sundays, take a few classes, read a few books, and you're good.

[26:48] He's saying, drop everything and follow me. There's a difference there. So often when we become a Christian, we take that step. And really, all that's changed is where we use our Sunday mornings. Or maybe the books that we read are slightly different.

But this is a complete U-turn. This is a complete change. And he throws, he leaves them. This is interesting. When you are called to follow Christ, you're actually called to let go of everything. This is the biggest catch of his life.

This could feed his family for a very long time. Yet what does he do with that catch? Absolutely nothing. He leaves it. Sometimes we, we're just asking God for gifts.

Bless me with health and wealth and safety and comfort and assurance and all these things. And then we hold on to those things. And we neglect to think, actually, it's not really about the gift. It's about the one who gives us the gift. Are we willing to let go of all of those things?

And I've shared this journey many times before. When we took that step into ministry, Christina and I, we were like, okay, here we go. Let's knock down and let's just live this life. And we're just going to follow him. And yet the Lord just kept providing abundantly, abundantly with us.

[27:53] We ended up moving our house, hoping to rent it so we can get some money. And ended up somehow, through a different circumstance, living in an even nicer place. What has just happened there? Why are we so blessed by this? And now we have all these people around us who we get to walk with and love and grow up with.

And this is so good. And that's when the call to Hong Kong came. And God says, I've been so good to you. All those things that I've blessed you with. Would you be willing to even let go of those things? And come.

And follow me. Because it's not about the good things. It's not about the fish. It's not about the healing. It's about following the God who can. And following the God who will. And following the God who has given up everything for us.

So Christianity is not just, hey, you're a Christian now. Which means you're committing to being a good person. That you don't evade tax. Every now and again you try not to curse. How's that going actually, Erica? Is it going okay?

Still on track? Kind of. It's not just behavior modification. It's a heart transformation where you're saying, okay, I'm going to change my name.

[28:57] I'm not even Simon Peter anymore. I'm Peter. And I'm going to follow you. To the end. Abandon everything and follow. And here's a wife that he has to explain this to when he goes home.

Hey, darling, I was out. See, just cool story here. I was out fishing. I know that we're struggling a little bit. Couldn't get any fish. Then this guy comes. Gives us loads of fish.

And now I've got to follow him. Oh, but where's the fish on it? Oh, actually, I left it out in the water. But wait, does that mean you're not coming? No. Does that mean you're not coming home tonight? I guess. I guess I'm not coming home this year. Can you imagine that conversation with his wife?

And then James and John telling Zebedee, hey, dad, actually, all of your life, you've created this business for us to be able to take over. So we'll continue being the greatest fishermen in this town. We've got to go. All your hopes that you've placed in the two of us, we're now going to move on. Hey, friends, did you hear about James, John, and Peter? They just got up and left.

[30:01] We have no idea why. Just followed this random guy. How many of us have the courage to do something like that? How many of us have the courage to kind of go, God, I'm going to trust you.

I want to trust you even with my family. And actually, I encourage you to ask Christina about this. We took that step from England to Hong Kong when there was her family in the UK that she just loves dearly, holds close to her heart and is praying for daily.

It keeps her up at night. That was her wrestling match. She was like, gosh, really? But I thought you want me here to be able to love and share love and share you to my family.

Now you're asking me to go? And I'll tell you, that woman is a strong woman, both in the physical sense and in a spiritual, emotional sense also. Because that was the wrestling match.

God called her and she followed. And that's the call that we all have here. Are we willing to leave everything to follow him?

[31:01] Thankfully, fortunately for all of us here, the Lord isn't calling us to do those things necessarily. Not all of us are called to give up our jobs and go. Many of us, I would say the majority of us are actually called to be in our jobs, to live in the most reckless, relentless way that we can.

But the question really is just your heart again. And you might say, well, do you know how much I give? I turned up to church this morning early to stack up the chairs.

I gave up my Thursday evening to hang out with a group of guys. I even took a guy out for coffee. And God time and time again says the same thing. It's not about what you're giving. It's what you're still holding back. It's, oh, you may be giving these things and you may be doing these things, but actually there is something deep inside that I'm still, that I'm, that I'm most interested in.

And it's not even that thing. It's like a parent arguing with a little kid. Hey, give me the toy. It's not about the toy. It's about obedience and about, it's about trust.

Because he doesn't care really about the toy. As Florence said at the beginning, he just cares about you. He just cares about relationship with you and I. That's the only thing he cares about. It's never been about the fish.

[32:14] It's never been about the healing. It's about, do you trust him? And how will you respond to that? So this one, I'm actually going to bring my brother Jay up because we hear this story.

We hear Peter getting recruited into ministry and you know, oh, that's a cool story, bro. But really, what does it mean for us 2,000 years later? What does it mean to us here in Hong Kong? What does it here mean for someone who's a young adult, who's just trying to pave their way in surviving in the city?

What does that look like? And actually, Jay, last week he came to me and said, the Lord's just been stirring in my heart something about this passage. I think, and I'll let him explain more, I think I need to share. So here, can we just give him a round of applause just to encourage him?

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

I'm really excited to be here today and share a few things that God's put on my heart in this passage. I did actually, before I'm getting into it, I wanted to read this passage just one more time because I think it's really important.

[33:19] And I'm conscious that I'm going to say a lot of things here today, but nothing is more important than the next 30 seconds. And so if you've been nodding off, this is your chance to nod off for the next 30 seconds, feel free.

All right. Luke 5. Jesus calls the first disciples. On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked them to put out a little from the land.

And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their partners and the other boats to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

[34 : 26] For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, do not be afraid.

From now on, you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. So I think for me, when I was going through this passage, I was conscious that, you know, we've heard this passage a lot of times, right?

I mean, we've read the gospel so many times and these stories can become so numb very quickly. It can just be, oh, that's great for Simon. You know, he caught a great number of fish. His life was transformed.

But I think it's really easy to detach ourselves from these stories as well. So really my heart for coming out today was I wanted to share what does this passage really mean for us living in Hong Kong in the 21st century? What does it really mean?

What are the implications? And I didn't want it to just be another Sunday where we come and we hear James or me talk and think, oh, that's a great story. And our heart has not changed at all.

[35 : 29] So I wanted to share just a few practical things that maybe we could do together as a church to maybe apply this teaching into our own lives as well. So I'm going to be talking about the implications of this passage, but I'll be talking in the frame of the one thing that really resonated with me the most while I was going through this passage.

And that very thing is that the miracle would not have happened if Peter did not say yes. Now, we overlook that because it's just like, OK, Peter just said yes. But we have to really remember that this is Simon's field, right?

He's really good at this. And when Jesus comes, I imagine that Simon saw this guy. OK, he's a carpenter. He doesn't know anything about fishing. I've been here all night. I've done everything. This is my field. I know these waters. I don't need to listen to some carpenter. What do you know about fishing? Stick to your religious stuff. I'm going to stick to my stuff. He could totally have said that. And the miracle would not have happened.

And I think it's really important to note here that Jesus intentionally goes into the place of Simon Peter's life where he probably was the most prideful in, right? It doesn't he doesn't just see Peter at the synagogue.

[36 : 30] I think it's intentional. He chooses to meet Simon exactly where he's at. And I think that's really important to note. I think that's important to note because prior to this, we saw Simon.

Simon witnessed Jesus perform a lot of miracles already, right? He saw Jesus cleaning an evil spirit from a man in a synagogue. He saw Jesus literally healing his mother-in-law.

So he's seen Jesus' miracles. But why does this one hit so different? Why does Simon say, depart from me for I am a sinful man? And I think it's because it's so personal to him. This is something that hit right into his heart.

And it's not just something that he observed. But Jesus goes right into the place where he's probably struggling the most to invite Jesus in. So I was thinking of that. Okay, that's great.

And I wanted to take a moment as I was praying for this day today and sharing. I wanted everyone or invite everyone to think, what is your equivalent of fishing? What is the area of your life where you're probably very confident in?

[37 : 29] Maybe it's your job. Maybe it's a school. I don't know what it is. What is that one area where you struggle to say yes to Jesus in? Put it another way. What is one area in your life where you're holding back from Jesus?

What is that one area? And I wanted to put it a little bit into context and maybe share just from my own personal experience. I was really challenged while I was preparing for this. And the reason being, my fishing is, I guess, my sense of comfort.

And to be, funnily enough, coming up here is a terrifying prospect for me. I am heavily introverted and I would be much rather be sitting right where Joe sat at right now and just hiding in the corner. It goes against my every belief to come up here. But two years ago, funnily enough, I just got back from the military. And I was on the tram with Gabs, my bro here.

And I said to him, hey, you know, I think the Lord's calling me to preach. I think the Lord's calling me to preach. But, dude, I can't, like, I suck at speaking. I'm so nervous when I'm up there.

[38:28] I don't want to do that. That goes against everything I think that I'm good at. I don't think I should. That's not for me. And I remember doubting a lot. And, well, here I am now. But this is my leap of faith in him.

When Simon says, I've been toiling all night, for me, my equivalent is, this is not for me. I can't do that. But there is a leap of faith that I decided to take in him. And this is only my third time now. But I think sometimes we think about all these teachings about Jesus. And they can feel so burdensome. You have to do this. You have to forgive. You have to have grace. You have to. There's so many you have to's.

And when Jesus calls us to take a leap of faith in him, it can feel really burdensome. And we sometimes call it the cost of discipleship or denying ourselves. And they have such negative connotations to them.

And I guess it's because there's a sacrifice that needs to be put forward. But coming back to what James said about abundance earlier, I think I really, truly believe that on the other side of our obedience and the discomfort that we feel when we obey him, there's a freedom and there's life that we will experience in a new way.

[39:32] And I can confidently say that for myself. It's my third time now. But when I come up here and afterwards, I'm still like my knees are trembling and everything. But I think my heart, there's an indescribable feeling of knowing that I am following his call, that I am in line with it.

I'm just trying my best to obey him. And there's a freedom that comes with that. And so I think so often we think, oh, I just I don't want to sacrifice that. That's too hard. But I think I think we just don't realize the cost of not following him.

And I think we've all been there ourselves as well. Right. We've all decided to walk away from Jesus. I think there's a lot of people in here who have been Christians for a long time. And I think we've all had our fair share of the prodigal son moment where we've walked away from Jesus, just did everything to gratify our own flesh, did everything that we wanted.

Obedience to God. No, I don't want that. I want to just satisfy myself. And we all know the emptiness that comes with that. But I think like Simon did or like James did when he came to Hong Kong, taking a leap of faith in Jesus.

I don't think there's anything that can describe that feeling. And there's a freedom that comes with that. And I think Jesus came to set us free as well from all of the things that we are captive to in our lives. So I'm just conscious of that church.

[40:44] So what is that equivalent of fishing for you? I really wanted to encourage everyone, maybe tonight or like when you're having lunch today, when you're having your quiet moments, Jesus just ask him. Hey, Jesus, there's probably an area, you probably know deep down in your heart what that area is for you, whether it's your struggle to say yes or whether it's what you're struggling to say no in.

You know what that is. I encourage you to bring that before him. And as you're struggling and wrestling with that, Lord, do I really obey you in this? I just pray that you remember John 10, 10. Jesus says, I came to give life and life abundantly. Jesus isn't calling you because he wants to harm you. He's not calling you to obey you because he wants something bad for you. It's because he loves you and he knows that what's on the other end of that obedience is freedom.

So may we remember that as we spend some time just meditating and dwelling on what that area of fishing is for us. I wanted to end with just one last note. I think it's really easy to, as we're thinking about these things, what is the area of my life where I'm struggling with?

What is my fishing? It can so easily become, okay, that is my problem. That is my idol and I need to do X, Y, Z. This is my game plan. And it all becomes about me, me, me.

[41:56] This is what I'm going to focus. This is my problem. And we completely miss out the point. James talked about the point of the miracles earlier, right? It's not just, of course, it's because Jesus can.

But I think really Jesus performs that miracle specifically for Simon because he wants relationship with Simon. He's inviting him for a relationship, right? And when we're thinking about these problems, I think it can so often just be, I'm just going to try to fix this by myself and lose the point that Jesus just wants you to look at him.

If we look at this passage and we see how Simon turns from this passive observer and believer of Christ and active follower, it's when he realizes who Jesus is. It's not when he's like focused on his problems.

He's focused on Jesus. And I want to encourage everyone, the how behind this as well. It's not just let's just focus on our problems. Let's like turn our lives around. Let's use our willpower and just change our life for the good. I don't think that's the point.

I think we're missing the point if we interpret it like that. Jesus is inviting everyone in this room to a relationship with him. And I think we have to remember that as we go about, as we meditate on the things that we're struggling with, it's really about him.

[43:00] And only he can transform our hearts. So I just wanted to wrap up with that. Thank you for having me. And I think I'll just, yeah, I guess James wants to wrap up. Yeah. Thank you, Jay. Thank you.

Just honoring you for your obedience and your leap of faith in doing that. And just to be able to see him wrestle with us is just an inspiration to me as well. Put simply, I think there's two groups of us here.

There's one group who are like, you know what? I'm trying my best. I'm striving. I'm straining. I'm stressing. I think I want to be the best Christian that I can be. And for you, you just got to have that heart of Peter. Just get on your knees and go, I've tried everything.

But I'm just going to follow you. I'm just going to rely on you. Because you're the one that can do it.

There's that group. There is another group, though, who actually you haven't really done much at all. And actually, you come every Sunday morning and you listen to a sermon.

And then you'll just be like, okay, well, he talked about following and I guess I followed him. And then we're done. With that group, I'm just kind of like, okay. Just like what Jay said. What's stopping you from following him?

[44:07] There's actually a fear there. You're like, oh, but I'm just lazy. Yeah, I know you're lazy. I can confirm that. But there's something. But why are you lazy? What are you actually afraid of?

What's the actual thing that you're most afraid of? If you did this, what would happen to you? And here, that's where I hope you can receive that lesson and go, okay.

Let me take that step. And we're here saying nothing that's new. But I do truly believe that there are some of us here who the Holy Spirit is going, okay, that's you. Get up. Take this leap of faith.

And see the freedom on the other side. If I was just to sum up this whole thing, this whole account, it would be, when you trust in God, it leads to transformation. When you trust in God, it leads to transformation.

When you take him at his word. Now, a lot of people struggle with that, especially maybe the next generation, because we don't like to take people at their word anymore. We question everything.

When someone in authority tells us to do something, the first question we ask is why.

[45:07] Right? And sadly, I don't even blame you because there are so many institutions, so many leaders that are just falling around and just falling like flies around us. And we're like, okay, I don't trust leaders anymore. So you rewind maybe 10, 20, 30 years ago, people would just listen to a leader.

Hey, do that, and you would just do it without questioning. Correct? But now, we're like, you know what? No, I'm not going to listen to that. I need to know why. I need to know the reason behind it. But what we have here is a God who can be trusted.

Who actually, we can say, at your word, I will do this. Now, if you see a loving parent, and I hope I'm one of these loving parents, there are times when I ask very friendly and politely to my children, Hey, can you do this?

And then they'll ask why. I say, oh, that's a great question. So the answer is, it's because I told you so. Why? Because I want you to trust me. Because I want you to know that I love you.

Because I want you to know that actually, if I explained it to you, you wouldn't even understand. That's a different level of trust. That's a different level of faith that we need to have.

[46:09] But we look at this Christ here, and we're like, we have to take him at his word. Why? Because we see that he was willing to go on the cross first. Why would you not listen to someone who was willing to sacrifice their own life for you?

So take him at his word. And then follow him at all costs. And you realize afterwards that there is a cost. Don't let any preacher, don't let any church tell you, hey, there's not really much you have to

do.

The bar is this low. All you have to do is just turn up on time. And that will be enough. Don't, Jesus says very clearly, there is a cost to discipleship.

You will have to die to yourself. You'll have to die to yourself. And then you will be able to live.

There is that surrender to begin with. And honestly, this is not a concept that is unfamiliar to us.

Parents, the moment you conceive and the moment you go through the process of childbirth, there is a dying to self. There is a surrender saying, hey, not my will, but this, not my good, but not my comfort, but this child's comfort.

[47:14] But at all costs, would you follow him? Recognize that there is a cost, that there is a high bar. I'm not going to be here and lie to you and say there isn't.

But what we are here saying is that it is worth it. And we all know, well, actually, it's been a long time since I've known. We all know when you go to the gym for a very long session and you come out, you're like, that hurt. But that was good.

So I've been told. Trust in God leads to transformation. Take him at his word. Follow him at all costs. And he comes to right where you're at.

You're like, oh, but I'm not quite good enough yet. Well, neither was Peter. Have you heard that cheesy quote that I love, which is, God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called. Yeah.

God does not call the equipped. He does not call those who are ready, who are great and who are holy. He equips those who are called. So you might be sat here going, I'm not worthy. I don't deserve to be it.

[48:10] And I shouldn't be doing it. Well, perfect. Perfect. You have satisfied the entry requirements. That's all you needed. Just a willing heart to get down on your knees and say, I don't deserve to be here.

I am unworthy. He equips the called. So follow him. And of course, Peter does. Peter does. He follows this man who went to the cross.

And of course, church history and church legends, though he's not in the Bible, will tell you that actually Peter followed him all the way to his own death. And he, as has been told, dies under persecution by also dying on a cross.

But still, to the day of his death, as legend goes, he dies on the cross, but he chooses to be hung upside down. Why? Because he is unworthy. Because he didn't want to die in the same way as his Lord.

Would we have that heart of humility? Where we would be willing to follow him at all costs, humble ourselves at his feet. And whilst he suffered with him, he is now also glorified with him.

[49:12] And Peter, this impulsive Peter, ends up being the rock that Jesus builds the whole church on. Used for great.

Outlasts the whole Roman Empire. Would we be a little bit like Peter? Would we drop our nets? And would we follow him? Something that I really learned from Jay was, Peter surrendered the desire, the idea that he can do this by himself.

And then he realizes in that moment that, wow, it's him. Behold, the Messiah. Yeah. He reaches the promised land simply because he realizes who Jesus is.

And he points to him and goes, this is God. Would we do the same? And when we do that, and when our eyes are focused on him and not on the challenges, when our eyes are focused on Jesus and not on ourselves, you realize everything else pales in comparison.

You realize everything minimizes it to its very small place. And then we will be able to do great things. Can I invite us now as Florence and the team are going to lead us again in the song that we sang earlier, this is our God.

[50:26] Would we have that now? I truly believe I don't need to say any more because I think the Holy Spirit has probably spoken to you in a specific way. Whether it is an issue of trust that you have or whether you're refusing to change or whether you're refusing to act.

Would you allow the Holy Spirit to work in you now? And would you respond? Don't just listen to this message and go, oh, that was a okay message. It's a bit dark in here, so I was falling asleep. Take that message, listen to it, and go, God, what did you have for me there?

And how must I respond? How must I respond? Let's pray. Jesus, just like those many, many years ago.

Where a Peter who had tried everything. Falls at your feet. Not focusing on the limitations that he had or the efforts that he put in.

But on simply who you are. That the gospel is this, not what we can do. But what you have done.

[51:45] And we too, like Peter, are unworthy to be in your presence. We don't deserve to be here. And yet you came to us. You'd emptied yourself.

And you were obedient to the point of death. Even death on the cross. So we spend these last few moments now as we're together, as we gather, to turn our eyes to you.

Declare that you are God. That you are good. That you are here. And we fall at your feet. Yes, Lord, we will fall at our feet.

And we will worship you. Lord, we're reminded that, yeah, there will be a day where we will see you face to face.

And in that moment, in that very moment, all that matters is how we respond. And we will not respond moderately. We will bow down on our knees and recognize and see that you are God.

[52:55] That you are King. And Lord, we gather in these moments to remind each other that that day is coming. But that day is also here. And Lord, as we head out from this place, you are still King.

You are still sovereign. And Lord, may that heart posture remain when we're in the workplace, when we're in the bank, when we're in the hospital, when we're in the school. Wherever we are, Lord, may that posture of worshiping you, knowing that you are sovereign.

That you hold not just our lives and our little families in your hands, but you hold the whole universe in your hands. And Lord, I just want to pray a prayer of blessing for our community as we head on into Chinese New Year.

As we head on into a week of what could be a lot of family dinners or dinners of people that we don't see so often. Lord, even in those dinners, in those meals, in those conversations, may your presence be known.

May your presence be with us. I pray that we be two peas. That we be present and patient. May we be present and patient this week to all that we encounter. And not just the people we're meeting, but even the people we're walking by who may not have families to eat and celebrate New Year's with.

[54:07] The cleaners, the workers around our buildings, Lord, may we love on them. May we see you in each and every single person that we come across, Lord. For they are a miracle.

We are all living miracles that you created in your image. And so, Lord, I just pray. Help us be present. Help us be patient. And we can only do that through the power of your Holy Spirit. So, with that, Lord, we pray that you go before us.

You go before us. And we put this week into your hands. May we honor you in all that we do from this moment on. That church doesn't end here. It doesn't end when we leave this building.

It continues until the day you return. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.