

# A Boatload of Conviction

Luke 5: 1 – 11

February 7, 2010

## I. Introduction

- A. Some of you will remember the days of week-long evangelistic crusades
  - 1. Or tent revival meetings, with their enthusiastic singing and powerful preaching
    - a. Always ending with an altar call for people to come forward to receive salvation
  - 2. While the congregation sang numerous verses of “Just as I Am”
- A. Rebecca Cohsenbein, of Kettering, OH recalls one of those crusades in particular
  - 1. During the final night, she says, our oldest son very slowly made his way to the altar
    - a. Following the service Dad commented on his decision.
  - 2. Our son replied, "Yes, it was very hard to make it all the way to the front."
    - a. It was then we discovered that he took the speaker's instructions of "every head bowed and every eye closed" very seriously
      - (1) He had made his way up the aisle without looking.
- A. Many of us have made a similar trip at some time or another in our life
  - 1. More likely with our eyes open – but perhaps with some of the same feelings
    - a. That motivated this young man
- A. Whether or not we made that kind of a physical journey
  - 1. There is one part of that experience that every Christian has in common
    - a. That is, we must come under the conviction of personal sin
- A. It may happen in different ways, and it may not happen all at once
  - 1. But I believe that we cannot truly experience God's salvation
    - a. Until we have somehow arrived at the place where we recognize our sinfulness before God, and our absolute helplessness to do anything about it
- A. That's what I believe happened to Simon, the man who became the Apostle Peter
  - 1. On that special day along the shore of the Sea of Galilee
- A. It wasn't an evangelistic message that caused Peter's conviction
  - 1. There wasn't even an invitation given – although there are scriptures
    - a. Indicating that Peter and his brother Andrew, had been invited
      - (1) To become followers of Jesus some time earlier
- A. Still, it must have been an experience that would linger in Peter's mind
  - 1. For a long time, considering the new understanding that was given to him

- A. Last Sunday, we looked at an event in the lives of those first followers of Jesus
  - 1. When they saw a miraculous sign of Jesus' power and authority
- A. And we heard that this miracle of changing water into wine
  - 1. Caused those disciples to believe in him
    - a. But it seems to me, as I look at the larger picture found in the gospels
      - (1) That this was one step, one of many steps that these men would take
        - (a) Along the path of transformation from unbelief to believers in Jesus
- A. There would be many people, over the three years of Jesus' public ministry
  - 1. Who would hear him speak, and see him perform miracles
    - a. They were often amazed at his teaching and His power
  - 2. Some of those people would end up rejecting Jesus, because he didn't fit
    - a. Their image of what the Messiah should be and do
  - 3. Others were more slow to make up their minds, waiting for more evidence
    - a. Or for some other sign before they committed themselves to Him
  - 4. But there were some who did not hesitate. They made the choice immediately
    - a. They saw something in Jesus that spoke directly to their heart
      - (1) They saw a need in their lives and they believed Jesus could meet that need
- A. The difference in those responses can be found in Peter's conviction and confession
  - 1. And I believe his statement stands as a model for us today
    - a. And as a witness to our unbelieving neighbors and friends
  - 2. In that time, or those times, when we are faced with the choice
    - a. Of whether or not we believe in Jesus
- A. Go away from me Lord, Peter said, for I am a sinful man
  - 1. It was like he had just seen himself in a special kind of mirror
    - a. That reflected an image of what he looked like on the inside
  - 2. And when he saw himself, as compared to the perfect holiness and love
    - a. That he recognized in Jesus, he didn't like what he was seeing
      - (1) He was afraid to even be standing as close as he was to Jesus
        - (a) Go away from me Jesus, I don't deserve to be near you
      - b. With all the ugliness in my heart and in my life
        - (1) I shouldn't even be allowed to be in your presence
- A. Let's look at our text again, to see if we can understand what it was
  - 1. That brought such a powerful conviction to Peter's heart

- II. It was becoming another ordinary day for Jesus, it seems
  - A. No matter where he went, the crowds of people followed him or found him
    - 1. Seeking to hear what many were coming to believe was a special word from God
  - A. Perhaps Jesus was also performing miracles of healing that day, we aren't told
    - 1. But whatever was attracting the crowd, they were so eager to get close to Jesus
      - a. That they were about to shove him into the waters of the lake
  - A. So, in order to keep on speaking to the whole group
    - 1. Jesus climbs into a fishing boat that is nearby, and asks the owner, Peter
      - a. To push out a little way from the shore
  - A. The fact that Peter was willing to do this for Jesus is another indication
    - 1. That Jesus wasn't a perfect stranger to him at this point
  - A. After all, we hear later that Peter had been up all night fishing, he was probably tired
    - 1. And, since fishing was his primary source of income
      - a. Rather than a sport it might be for some of us
    - 2. Peter was probably feeling pretty frustrated at not catching any fish all night long
  - A. I'm not into fishing all that much – I can enjoy the thrill of feeling a big fish
    - 1. Pulling on the end of my line, but if I'm lucky enough to actually catch one
      - a. I'd just as soon put it back in the water as to have all the mess
        - (1) Of cleaning it and taking it home to eat
  - A. But fishing was an occupation to Peter, a job that kept a roof over his head
    - 1. And put bread on the table for his family – not catching fish meant no income
      - a. For that long, hard night of work
    - 2. I'm told that fishermen in that day usually did most of their fishing at night
      - a. The cooler temperatures tended to bring the fish closer to the shore
        - (1) Some of you would know better than I whether that makes any sense
    - 3. Daytime was for taking your catch to the early morning markets
      - a. Mending your nets and maintaining your boats – and hopefully catching some Z's
        - (1) So you would be ready to go back out the next evening
  - A. We don't know how long Jesus used Peter's boat as a pulpit
    - 1. Maybe Peter was able to catnap part of the time – somehow I doubt it
  - A. Luke simply records that when Jesus was finished speaking, he said to Peter
    - 1. Hey, why don't you row out into the deeper water and let down your nets
      - a. Just see what you can catch

- A. Peter's response, according to Luke, was a term of respect – "Master" he said
  - 1. We've worked all night long and didn't catch a thing
- A. I can think of a few other things that I might have said if I were Peter
  - 1. Having to do with Jesus' impertinence at telling him, a professional fisherman
    - a. How he should do his work
  - 2. But if Peter had any such thoughts, he must have kept them to himself
    - a. At least Luke, the writer of this gospel account, didn't hear about them
- A. What we read is that Peter says – If you say so, Jesus, we will go back out again
  - 1. We will let down the nets again, just like we did all night long
    - a. Maybe he was thinking that Jesus just needed to see the results for himself
- A. But it was Peter who saw, more than he could have dreamed of
  - 1. For a fisherman, it was like winning the lottery
    - a. Or having a rich uncle die, and leave you his vast inheritance
  - 2. More fish than even these experienced fishermen had ever caught before
- A. I can only imagine what it was like – Peter and Jesus, maybe others out in the boat
  - 1. Dropping the heavy nets into the water, and then beginning to draw them back in
    - a. Seeing the first few fish come into sight
      - (1) And then thinking maybe the net was caught on something
        - (a) Because they are straining so hard to pull it back up into the boat
- A. I can imagine Jesus, with a smile spreading across his face
  - 1. And Peter, ever the vocal one in the group, calling out for help
    - a. To his partners in a second boat – Hey guys, come give us a hand!
      - (1) We've got more fish here than we can handle by ourselves
- A. And the fish just keep on pouring into the boats, until they are both filled up
  - 1. So many that these sturdy fishing vessels are in danger of sinking under the weight
    - a. And all of the fishermen are excited and hollering back and forth...
      - (1) Except for Peter, who is starting to see something more than just the fish
- A. Because Peter is no longer thinking about all the wealth these fish represent
  - 1. He's thinking that Jesus must be a better fisherman than he's ever met before
- A. And if Jesus has control over all those fish swimming in the sea...well
  - 1. Nobody but God could do what Jesus just did
    - a. And all of sudden, Peter doesn't have a boatload of fishes on his hands
      - (1) Instead, he has a boatload of conviction on his heart

- A. It says something about Peter's understanding of God that causes what happens next
  - 1. In his day, God was worshipped from afar
    - a. Many people would not even mention God's name out loud
      - (1) For fear of sounding disrespectful
  - 2. They could not have sung the words to the song that we sang earlier
    - a. Because they didn't believe that ordinary humans could come into God's presence
      - (1) Or at least it was not possible to do so and live
- A. It may be that we have emphasized the love and grace of God
  - 1. To the point that we don't even consider how amazing it is
    - a. That we are invited to come into God's presence with boldness
  - 2. And in doing so, we have lost out on some of the feeling that Peter may have had
    - a. When he realized that he was standing in the presence of a deity
      - (1) A very human-looking God, but never-the-less God
- A. And it was that sense of being in the presence of almighty, all-powerful God
  - 1. Who could command the obedience of the very fish of the sea
    - a. Without even speaking a word
  - 2. That's what I believe caused Peter to throw himself down at Jesus' feet
    - a. And basically plead for his life to be spared
- A. Jesus, forgive my foolishness in thinking that you were just another man
  - 1. Forgive me for daring to think that I might even be a better fisherman than you
    - a. I don't deserve to live because what I've thought and said and done
      - (1) But please, have mercy on me and just go away
    - b. Otherwise, I know that I am doomed because of my sinfulness
  - 2. That's the conviction of sin that leads us to repentance
    - a. And the honest confession that always brings God's forgiveness
- A. The most beautiful words that Peter could have heard from Jesus at that moment
  - 1. Were the words that Jesus spoke to him – Do not be afraid, Peter
    - a. From now on...
- A. It must have seemed as though Peter's world was turned upside down
  - 1. Surely he was in the presence of a divine being
    - a. There was no other explanation for the miracle he had witnessed
  - 2. And yet, Jesus was speaking to him with love and compassion
    - a. From now on, Peter, I am going to change your whole life around

3. You're not going to be a fisherman anymore, not for fish like this anyway
  - a. From now on, you are going to be a fisherman for people
    - (1) You are going to be my net for bringing people into my boat

III. Conviction, guilt and shame are often viewed in a rather negative light these days

- A. But it is only when we become aware of our sin and imperfection
  1. And realize that our sin has created an impassable barrier between us and God
    - a. That we begin to understand our need for God's forgiveness and salvation
- A. And while confession of our sin and failure may seem like a hard thing to do
  1. Once we have made that confession, and accepted forgiveness
    - a. That's when we find ourselves freed to live for Jesus
  2. That's when the love that Jesus offers begins its powerful work
    - a. Of transforming us from fishermen, interested only in our own wants and needs
      - (1) Into servants and workers in God's kingdom
- A. We can see that transformation happening in Peter and his companions
  1. As recorded in the last verse of our text this morning
    - a. And when they had brought their boats to the shore
      - (1) They left everything and followed Jesus
- A. Left even those boats filled with fishes, as far as we can tell
  1. Maybe they gave them away to some of the people who had gathered there
    - a. Somehow, they didn't seem so amazing or exciting anymore
      - (1) At least not when compared with being close to Jesus
  2. That's the way conviction changes our lives
    - a. It came to Peter by the boatload that day, and I'm sure he didn't forget it soon
      - (1) Especially not the words of Jesus' response
  3. Have we experienced that kind of conviction in our lives?
    - a. Have we made our confession and accepted God's forgiveness?
  4. Then we, too, are called to be fishermen and women in God's kingdom
    - a. Come on, let's go back out and let down the nets
      - (1) Maybe we will also be amazed at the boatload of...fishes