**A GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISH**

***Fishers of Men***

***Luke 5:1-11***

Sunday School Lesson 4

*The Miracles of Jesus*

02/3/2019

**Introduction:** After the healing at the pool of Bethesda, Christ went throughout Galilee preaching and teaching the Word of God. It was also during this time that John the Baptist was arrested and imprisoned. While the Lord was on His way to Capernaum, He saw Peter, Andrew, James, and John on their ships in the Sea of Galilee. Peter and Andrew had met Jesus previously during the preaching of John the Baptist (Andrew was one of John’s disciples). It was during that time that Andrew took his brother Peter to meet the Messiah. While the men believed on Jesus that day, they had gone back to their secular work. As Jesus passed by, He called them to come and follow him. All four men left their nets and followed Jesus. He took the men with Him to Capernaum, and they were by His side while He preached in the synagogue. They watched intently as Jesus called a demonic spirit out of a man who was trying to distract the people from His preaching. After this, Peter took Jesus to his home. While in the home, Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law of her fever. That evening, people with all sorts of physical ailments lined up for Jesus to heal them. On the next day, Jesus departed for some solitary time of prayer in the desert. Peter and the other men went searching for Him, and they were confused when they found Him. Peter told Him that many people were looking for Him. Jesus told Peter that it was time to preach in other cities as well. As Jesus and the men traveled again by the Sea of Galilee, the men returned to their boats and their fishing trade. This is where we find the miracle of the great multitude of fish. This miracle was a symbolic message that Jesus had prepared for His disciples. Through this event, they would come to understand what Jesus was seeking for them. Perhaps, we can come to understand what He is seeking for us as well.

1. THE LORD USED THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISH TO GET THE DISCIPLES’ ATTENTION IN A WAY THAT OTHER MIRACLES HAD NOT DONE. (LUKE 4; 5:8-9)
2. **Notice the multitude of miracles that Peter and the men saw in Capernaum (Luke 4).** As mentioned in the introduction, Jesus brought the men with Him to Capernaum to show them the work that He wanted them to take part in. The Bible tells us that the people in Capernaum were astonished (same word used to describe Peter and the men in chapter 5) when they heard the powerful doctrine of Jesus. They were amazed when they saw Him cast out the demonic spirit. Yet, these two events did not have as profound an effect on the disciples. They already knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but their eyes had not yet been fully opened to the power that He had. Even the healing of Peter’s own mother-in-law did not have the same impact as the great multitude of fish. The Bible does not even give us a reaction from Peter in any of the Gospels regarding this healing. The disciples also saw as Jesus healed the many people lined up.
3. **Notice that the great multitude of fish spoke to the men because of their familiarity (Luke 5:8-9).** Why did this miracle get a bigger reaction from Peter and the men than the other miracles that had been previously performed? Simply, fishing was something that these men were very familiar with, and they were probably passionate about it as well. This was their trade. It was how they made a living. The Lord knew this and used this to get their attention. During Jesus’ preaching, He used many different illustrations and examples to get the attention of the multitude. He spoke to them in a way that they would understand and be able to respond. It’s great to know that our God speaks to the common man. A boatload of fish caused Peter to fall to the ground and confess that he was a sinner unworthy to be in the presence of the Lord! We can take comfort in knowing that God understands man and knows how to communicate with us. Likewise, we ought to seek wisdom from the Lord as we communicate with the lost in this world and get their attention on Christ.
4. THE LORD USED THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISH TO SHOW THE DISCIPLES THE FUTILITY AND EMPTINESS OF DOING THINGS WITHOUT CHRIST. (LUKE 5:4-5)
5. **Notice that their toiling was not by mistake (Luke 5:4).** When Jesus concluded His sermon to the people, He told Peter to launch the ship into the deep and let down the net. While Peter obeyed the command of Jesus, he was doubtful that they would have any success. He told Jesus that they had toiled all night without catching any fish. Do you think that it was a coincidence that they did not catch any fish the night before? Of course, we know that this was not a coincidence. This was a part of the Lord’s plan to show a miracle to His disciples. We might also consider that Jesus had previously told them to follow Him, and they had left the nets behind. Now, they had returned back to these nets. Perhaps, they thought that Jesus only wanted them to follow Him to Capernaum or back. He wanted more than that from them. It ought not to be a surprise then that their return to their previous trade was unsuccessful. As Christians, there is nothing but emptiness and toiling in returning to do what Christ called us to leave!
6. **Notice how much easier their fishing trip was with Christ (John 5:5).** As mentioned, they had toiled all night searching for fish. They had probably moved from spot to spot all night in search of a school of fish to fill their nets with. If they were like most fishermen, they would have spent an abundance of time contemplating among themselves why the fish weren’t moving. Maybe they even thought of different ways to try to catch the fish. How exhausting! With Jesus on board, though, not only did they have success, but it was much easier. Peter just had to obey the Word of the Lord, launch out into the deep, and let down the nets. Jesus told him upfront that there would be a draught of fish there. Life is much easier with Christ involved. We don’t have to overthink things. We just have to obey and listen. It’s simple, and it can save us from a world of heartache and frustration.
7. THE LORD USED THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISH TO HELP THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND HOW INSIGNIFICANT THE FISH WERE. (LUKE 5:6-11)
8. **Notice that the multitude of fish might have been the greatest accomplishment of their life (Luke 5:9).** Based on their reaction, it’s clear that the disciples had never caught so many fish in one excursion. This was the type of fishing story that they would have dreamed about. Each day, they got on their ships and went searching for exactly that type of catch. Again, remember that this was their life’s work. Had Jesus not come into their lives, a fishing day like that might have been their greatest accomplishment. When they saw the fish, I believe that they understood how insignificant those fish were in the grand scheme of their life. In just one short boat ride, Jesus had caught what they had been trying to catch their entire life. This is what led to Peter’s humbling response to the Lord. In that moment, he felt so small, as he realized that those fish were just a small part of God’s creation.
9. **Notice that they did not even take the fish with them (John 5:11)!** The greatest evidence we have to prove that they understood the insignificance of the fish is found in what they did when the ships made it to land. Those same fish which they were astonished at catching were left behind. They were more interested in the Person who could catch that many fish than in the fish themselves. The world is filled with things that we can be preoccupied and even amazed with. God’s creation is truly amazing. We have to be careful, though, to not get more impressed with the creation than the Creator. While the things in this world are great, there is going to come a day where it all passes away. What is it that we keep seeing as significant that God wants us to see as insignificant? He wanted them to be fishers of men not just fishermen.
10. THE LORD USED THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISH TO CHANGE THE DISCIPLES FROM FISHERS OF MEN TO CATCHERS OF MEN. (JOHN 1:35-41; MATTHEW 4:18-22; LUKE 5:10)
11. **Notice the three calls that were made to the disciples (John 1:35-41; Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:10).** There are many people that think that the call of the disciples in Matthew 4 is the same one that we find in Luke 5. Yet, the overwhelming evidence in Scripture supports these being two separate occasions. In total, this gives us three times that Jesus interacted with at least Peter and Andrew before they completely followed Him. I believe this should be outlined to show a call to three different things. First, we see a call for them to be believers. This takes place in John 1. This is a call that we all receive. Secondly, we see a call to be His disciples in Matthew 4. Just as all men are called to be saved; all those who are saved are called to be His disciples. In Matthew 4, Jesus tells them that He wants them to become fishers of men. This is the call for every Christian. The third call in Luke 5, though, was a special call. This was His call for them to be His apostles (see Luke 6). It may not be possible for everyone to quit their secular work to fully commit to the ministry, but there are those that are called for this particular purpose.
12. **Notice that He told them that they would now be catchers of men instead of fishers of men (Luke 5:10).** The difference between what Jesus said to the disciples in Matthew 4 versus Luke 5 might be hard to perceive for some, but there is a very clear difference. It’s a difference that any regular fisherman should be able to see. Jesus tells them in Luke that they would henceforth catch men. There is a big difference between FISHING and CATCHING. They had went fishing that night before, but they went catching that day. How would they now be catchers instead of just fishers of men? Well, this would happen primarily by their commitment. By leaving everything behind, they would be professional fishers of men. Who usually catches the most fish? Of course, it’s the one that is the most committed to it. They were going to give their life to fishing for men, and as a result, they would catch many!

**Conclusion:** While the message here was a calling to apostleship for these disciples, there is a message here for every Christian. Whether God has called you to just be a disciple or fully into His ministry, you ought not to neglect your responsibility to fish for men. While work responsibilities might limit the amount of commitment that one can make to fishing, we ought to look to commit as much time as possible to His work. We should understand the things that are insignificant in this world and prioritize the eternal!