

Who's In Charge in Christian Stewardship

5th Sun. after Epiphany– 02/06/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 5:1-11 Pastor Keith Besel (PWAP #1)

v.10, [Jesus says,] **“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”**

Introduction

✘ During our *People With A Purpose* journey this year, for the next three Sundays, we will consider the lessons that our Lord has to teach us from each of the regularly assigned Gospel Readings

→ The general theme that will guide us is “*Jesus’ Plan for Stewardship in His Church*”. The first two words of that theme are really the emphasis that we will focus upon this morning, because you see, I would submit that the primary thing upon which so any people get hung up regarding the topic of Christian Stewardship, centers around the question of who it is that is really in charge?

→ At its core, is Christian Stewardship ultimately about understanding my plan and my priorities for what it means to live as a believer or God’s plan and God’s priorities for each of His believers and for all of His people gathered within His Church?

I. How do we view our place?

✘ When I ask it like that, I’m sure that all of us would quickly say that of course, it’s not about my plan but about God’s plan and His power at work. The problem is though that just as we see Simon Peter fall before Jesus in verse eight and confess, “I am a sinful man, O Lord”, so each one of us here today must honestly do the same, regarding our attitude and role as His stewards.

✘ Consider first, for example, how you individually view your place in life before God. I think most of us would be quick to say that “yes, I believe in God; that I am a part of His family”. “I say it in the Creed each Sunday and at least whenever other people I know as Christians might ask me”.

→ But what happens outside of the church? What happens on a day by day basis in my normal activities each week? Who’s really in charge of what I’m doing from the time that I wake up until the time I go to bed each day? Isn’t it true that most of us go about our day by day activities working and striving to meet our own self-interests first? Oh sure there are others in charge of our time and priorities, but those are more often people like our teachers or employers or parents or others about whom we decide we are going to be around, right?

→ In essence, we retain the right or the attitude to say that “I am still in charge of what it means and what it looks like to be a believer”. And when we do actually give God some thought, we still live as if God’s plan is for us to be nothing more than individual Christians doing our own thing, our own way.

✘ But am I ever really outside of the church? What about Jesus’ plan for His entire Church? How do we as a congregation view our place in this life and society? I would submit that much of the time it is basically the same as I just talked about for us as individuals with a few small adjustments.

→ Sure, we confess our belief in Christ together in worship and occasionally when we are able to get a few of our members to take part in group activities, which even before Covid, has become an ever-increasing challenge. But even when we are together, we instinctively operate and make decisions based more upon what we have decided we are going to be about for our own best interests instead of what God has commanded or called us to be about in His Word.

→ And what's scary about this group outlook is that even within Christ's Church we often take advantage of our numbers to encourage the idea that we are the ones who are in charge of determining and defining what our church should be about in this world.

→ Think, for example about how issues are discussed and decided. "What do you believe we should be doing?" or "How do you all want to use these funds?" or "What should our mission be here in the church?" You see, "you" and "we" are the ones who typically run the verbs in these conversations and meetings. Wouldn't it be more Scriptural to ask or think about what Jesus has directed us to be about or how He is leading us to use the resources and talents and gifts with which He has so mightily blessed us?

II. Caught by Christ

✘ In our Gospel Reading the brothers, James and John, along with their fishing partner Simon, seem to be going through life much like each of us do individually and together as a group. They are Jews who are connected somehow to God; likely nothing more than average lay members in the local synagogue.

→ The clues in the text show that they are busy about their day and night careers as fishermen. We know that Simon had family; being married and living with his mother-in-law, while the father of James and John, Zebedee fished with them as well.

✘ When Jesus came to the Lake of Gennesaret He and the crowd following Him just sort of burst into the middle of their work; they interrupted their daily work of cleaning and repairing their nets after a fruitless night of fishing.

→ On top of that, this carpenter from Nazareth has the gall to give professional advice to the fishermen. Anyone who knows anything about fishermen knows you don't ask, "Did you try over there?" to someone who comes in empty-handed after fishing all night.

→ So, put yourself in Peter's place. You're a fisherman, a pro, skilled in your trade. You know that if the fish are going to run at all, it's going to be at night and you don't catch fish in deep water, but in shallower areas.

✘ So, when Jesus tells him, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (v.4), Peter respectfully calls Jesus Master – kind of like when you and I "say" we believe in God while we're here in church. But Peter still believes that he's the one who should be in charge of the fishing. "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at Your word I will let down the nets" (v.5).

→ Even in his obedience, Peter still thinks that he's the one who is fishing, doesn't he? What he fails to see at that point is that Jesus is the one who is actually in charge. Jesus is the one who is actually fishing. And Jesus' net of love is about to surround and "catch" another soul for His Father's kingdom.

✘ You know the rest of the story. Once Peter responds in faith, he and his partners bring in more fish than they can handle. Now Peter changes his tune from thinking he is in charge to understanding that he is in the presence of the Lord God Himself!

→ He falls on his knees in humility and repentance and fear and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (v.8). Did you catch that? No longer is Jesus simply "master". Now He is the one and only "Lord" God – the Creator and King over all things and all people, including the fish in the sea and the souls in His family of faith and every thing that they own and think about and do each and every day. Peter is convicted of his self-centered way of life, so much so that he is sorely afraid.

→ Jesus knows all of this and responds in compassion and love, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (v.10).

III. Caught by Christ to Catch Others

- ⊗ And with those few words Jesus does the work of catching souls for eternity at the same time that He defines for all of us in His Church who is really in charge of the Christian life and faith that He has given to us, ... AND what we are all to be about as a members in His Church.
 - ➔ There's a legend (which means it is only a fictional story) that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He was asked by an angel, "How do You propose to make known to the world that You have died for the sins of all?" In reply, Jesus said, "I have My followers on earth, and I have commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel". "But," said the angel, "What if they should fail?" "If they fail," concluded the Savior, "I have no other plan" (R. C. Rein, Treasury of Themes and Illustrations [Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1983] 257–58).
- ⊗ God's plan has always had two parts to it and only two parts: First, that each one of us would respond to His free gift of faith and be saved for eternity from the condemnation we all deserve by His Son's death and resurrection in our place. And second, that once we are in His Church, all of us will now use His gifts of Word and Sacrament according to His power and guidance to share His Word and serve all people in our day to day lives as fishers of men.
 - ➔ To that end, He has blessed us all with additional and abundant resources, talents, and gifts so that we will be able to reach into every nook and cranny of society to "catch" more souls for salvation.
 - ➔ That means that whatever your earthly vocation may be, friends; whatever activities you are about from the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night, you and I do it all as stewards of Christ; using His power; following His lead; spreading His love and truth the whole day through.
- ⊗ So, let's say you are a husband or wife; a mother or father; a son or a daughter the Lord's intention and desire is that you be the very best Christian husband, wife, mother, father, son or daughter today, because Christ is the one who has blessed you and enabled you in your unique and special role as His steward. And it's the same with every role that you have; with every resource that you receive from God in His generosity and love.
 - ➔ That means taking Jesus' words to Peter to heart for ourselves, "Do not be afraid" (v. 10).
- ⊗ I'd like for all of you to consider one of my favorite animals, the impala. Now impalas are a favorite of mine because the Impala was my high school mascot. Impalas are gifted by God with amazing abilities. They can leap 10 feet high and as far as 30 feet across. They are able to give a cheetah, the world's fastest animal, a good run for his money.
 - ➔ But one thing about the impala is that they will never jump over something where they cannot first see where their feet are going to land. This means that if they come up to a six foot wall, even though they could jump it easily, they won't because they can't see through it to the other side.
 - ➔ Unfortunately, there are a lot of impala-like members in Christ's Church; people who are gifted with amazing talent and blessed with unbelievable resources by our Lord. Yet they limit their activity and Christian witness out in the world because of their fear of going beyond what their earthly eyes and minds can see ahead of them.
- ⊗ As Jesus teaches us though today in that boat and backed up by Matthew 19:26, "With man" it is "impossible" to save ourselves or live as stewards in His Church, "but with God all things are possible".

→ When you and I realize that we have been accepted and surrounded by the net of Jesus' love and grace, then our response of faith puts us in the same position as Peter – ready to do whatever Jesus says; ready to go wherever Jesus will take us, whether we can actually see and understand what is ahead or not.

→ Yes, with Jesus truly in charge of our lives and all that He has given us, we are then set free, you see, to submit to Him and His ways as the One who is truly in charge of His ministry and His Church. We then have the joy of growing in our faith and spreading His net of love and care far and wide, because then we are His *People With a Purpose*. Amen.