

Focus on Luke 5:1–11

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gay L. Byron

At first glance Luke 5:1–11 is difficult to classify. It is generally considered a call narrative. This passage is also considered a miracle story, given the abundant outcome manifested at verse 6. Yet the theme of discipleship provides a theological anchor for this story about the fishermen and their experience with Jesus. The lection ends with the theme of renunciation, indicated by the terse statement, “they left everything and followed him” (v. 11). This is the heart of discipleship. For Luke, it includes the denial of family, friends, and physical possessions (5:28; 9:57–62; 14:33; 18:22–23).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” David L. Ostendorf

The life-altering power of God’s word—spoken, heard, and heeded—is dynamically evident in this story of call. The word begins to move horizontally—outward and outbound from Jesus. It falls on the ears of crowds hungry for that word; it falls on the ears of Simon and James and John, afraid, amazed, attracted, and ready. Not knowing what lay ahead on that open and uncharted journey from their familiar fishing boats, “they left everything and followed him,” unbound, outward-bound, horizon-bound, captured by a word that they would, in turn, carry “on the ground” among people waiting for it, listening for it.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”
Howard K. Gregory

The invitation to put out into the deep for a catch provides a sharp contrast to our human penchant for the predictable and the routine. It is an invitation to venture into new ground or new depths, but it also points to new challenges in mission and ministry for the church in every generation. We are challenged to respond to the urgings of God breaking into human lives. In the case of Simon, as for the Christian faced with such a command, there is the realization that the most profound and significant experiences of God and life are not to be found in the safe ways and places. Simon obeys the instruction and is surprised.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”
Peter Eaton

The NRSV rendering “catching people” masks a dynamism in the Greek that is lost in translation. Jesus is saying to Peter that he will be “taking” or “saving men and women alive” for the kingdom. “To take men and women alive” is a very different image from simply catching them as though they are food to be consumed. So how can the preacher and the community of the body of Christ make Jesus real for others and for ourselves in ways that are both true and genuinely compelling?