

‘Called Out of Our Weakness’ – Luke 5:1-11; Ex 3:1-12

Rev. Dawn Griffiths; Kirk of St. James, August 24, 2025

Today our gospel reading takes us back to the very early days of Jesus’ ministry; but already his fame was spreading. Wherever he went, a crowd quickly gathered. This day that Luke tells us about was no different. While Jesus was taking an early morning walk on the shore a crowd gathered, pushing in close to him.

Hemmed in, Jesus looked around for a platform to speak from. He saw two fishing boats drawn up on the shore. The fishermen had just returned from a night of fishing and were washing their nets before going home for breakfast and some sleep. Jesus recognized Simon and Andrew, James and John. He asked Simon to row him out into the lake a few yards so he could speak to the crowd from the boat. Simon was willing. Breakfast could wait. He and the others wanted to hear what Jesus had to say!

The crowd settled down and listened until Jesus finished, and it was time to go get on with their day. Simon and the others prepared to take the boat inshore, and head home. But Jesus surprised them by telling them to head out into deep water and let down their nets.

You can picture them smiling at each other, shaking their heads. What Jesus was asking them to do didn’t make any sense. They’d grown up fishing this lake, and they knew the best time for fishing was before the sun was high. In the cool of the night the fish came to the surface to feed. In the daytime they rested in the cool depths. Jesus *obviously* didn’t know anything about fishing! If Simon and the others had worked all night without catching so much as a minnow, what chance did they have of catching anything in the heat of the day?

But tired as they were, and as pointless as it seemed, Simon and Andrew did as Jesus asked; and to their surprise, they immediately caught so many fish their nets were breaking! They had to call James and John to help them haul in all the fish.

When they finally landed the catch – two boats full! – Simon, overwhelmed, fell down at Jesus’ feet and begged him ‘Go away from me Lord! I’m a sinful man.’ Poor Simon! He was tired, hungry and confused; he was amazed and awed by what had just happened. He hadn’t expected this from Jesus! Bear in mind this wasn’t the first time Simon and the others had met Jesus. In John’s gospel we learn they first met when John was baptizing in the Jordan river.

They all lived in the same town, and attended synagogue together. Luke tells us in chapter 4 that one day after synagogue Peter had invited Jesus to his home for a meal, where Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law; then later healed many who showed up at Peter's house. Simon had heard Jesus speak; seen him heal; had known there was something special about him... But in that moment he realized Jesus was far more than a teacher, or even a healer. Simon didn't know quite what to make of Jesus, but he knew that compared to Jesus, he, Simon, was sinful and unworthy. Jesus had a divine power Simon had never experienced before. Simon was used to being a leader; taking charge; feeling in control; but this experience threw him completely off balance.

When we experience the power of God it makes us aware of how powerless we really are, and how very great God is. That can be very scary for us who think we have things all figured out and our lives under control! Jesus understood what Simon's turmoil; and responded. Picture the scene: Simon is on his knees, frightened, confused...and Jesus, with a gentle, understanding smile reaches out to him; 'Don't' be afraid,' he says. Simon looks up – and suddenly peace and joy flood through him. This man is not only a man of great power, but of great love!

'Don't be afraid Simon! I have a job for you; I want you to work with me. Instead of bringing in fish, you'll be bringing in people!' Power and love – a word, a touch and an invitation... and everything changed – not only for Simon, but for the other three as well. The four men brought the boats to shore, and all four left everything to follow Jesus. That's discipleship. That's what we're called to do; to be partners with Jesus; to live in God's power and love; to share the good news; to bring people to Jesus.

But... we say.... But that was then and this is now.... But things were different back then... But that was Simon Peter, and I'm no Simon Peter! But Simon's not so different from us. His story in many ways is our story. Just as Moses' story, and Jeremiah's story; and Isaiah's, and Abraham and Sarah's, and Gideon's, and the disciples' stories are all our stories... Because the same way God called each of them, Jesus calls each of us. We all have different callings, based on our talents, gifts and circumstances; just as each one we read of in scripture was called to do something specific based on their gifts and the needs around them.

Yes, it's scary when Jesus calls us to do something outside of our comfort zone; maybe to serve on a committee or board; or pray with someone; or serve at a homeless shelter; or reach

out to a stranger; or speak in public; or one of a thousand other things....

But it's always been scary; for Moses; for Gideon; for Simon, Andrew, James, John ...

It's easy to come up with excuses for why we can't do what God is asking us. And our excuses probably sound a lot like the ones we find in scripture

We heard some of Moses' excuses this morning. He told God he wasn't qualified or important enough. 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?' said Moses. I'm just a goat herder! I wouldn't know what to do! And besides, I'm no good with words!

Do you remember Jeremiah's excuse? "I'm too young!" And Sarah? 'I'm too old!' How about Isaiah? I'm not good enough! I'm a man of unclean lips! And remember Gideon, who God called to chase the Midianites out of Israel? I'm not a warrior, I'm a farmer! And besides, I'm not important! I'm the youngest son of an unimportant family in the least important tribe in Israel!

Yet each of these people did great things – different things, but each very great things – because they trusted God's promise, which was the same for each of them. When Moses said 'who am I to go to Pharaoh?' God replied 'I am with you.' How can we argue with that? When the power and presence of God is with us, what else do we need? Paul expressed it this way "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

When we look at Scripture we realize that the best disciples, the disciples who accomplish what God asks, are the ones who don't feel competent. They don't rely on their own strength; or wisdom; or power; they rely on God. David is a perfect example. He knew that on his own, he was no match for Goliath; but he went out in the name and the power of the Lord – and won. Every victory of David's was won by relying on God to lead and direct him; by relying on God's presence to be with him.

But after so much success, David got cocky; he began to rely on his own power and wisdom. He made bad choices – including taking Bathsheba from her husband, Uriah, and having Uriah killed.

When David acted in his own wisdom and strength things went from bad to worse for his family and for Israel. It was only when David realized his sinfulness, asked forgiveness, and once again relied on God's leading and power that things again went well for Israel.

It's the same with all of us. When we begin to think we've got it all figured out, we stop asking God for guidance. It often takes a failure or even a disaster for us to recognize that we need to rely on God. It's only when we recognize how weak and ill-equipped we really are that we see how much we need God.

Paul learned that. In his 2nd letter to the Corinthians he tells of a 'thorn in his side'. We're not told exactly what it was, but we know it was painful, and Paul felt it was holding him back in his ministry. He prayed 3 times to be healed; and Jesus answered him: 'My grace is all you need for **my power is made perfect in your weakness!**'

And Paul finally got it! It's only when we realize we need the power of God in our lives that we ask for it. It's when we're weakest that we welcome and rely on the guidance and power of God. As Christians we're called to be disciples; and paradoxically, the best disciples are often the ones who think they don't have what it takes; we're too old or too young; too unimportant or too sinful; too unworthy or too weak. But to be a fruitful disciple we need God's power – and God's power is made perfect in our weakness! Jesus continues to call people; to call us into the adventure of discipleship; and promises to be with us always. It's okay to come up with your best excuses – I certainly did: when I was called to ministry I came up with a lot – and they weren't even very original! 'I'm too old, I'm not qualified, I'm no good at public speaking; I'm afraid...'

But God had heard it all before. And the promise I received was the same as the one given to Moses and Peter and all God's people. Jesus assures us 'I am with you always!' So go ahead - make your best excuse.... Then realize that your best excuse is really your best qualification; for only when we know our weakness will we see how much we need to rely on Christ's power. And when we rely on his power and leading, it's amazing what we will accomplish for him! Prayer: Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you. You assure us there is no need to be afraid. Give us grace to follow in faith, trusting in your love and power, and in your promise that you are with us always. We pray in faith and expectation. Amen.