

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 5:1-11

Year C - Epiphany 5, Text: Luke 5:1-11
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In this pericope, we read about Jesus calling the first disciples who were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, here called “the Lake of Gennesaret.”

Verse 5:1: Jesus is standing on a shore of the Sea of Galilee — teaching. Note that the Gospels never refer to Jesus *preaching* — only *teaching*. Gathered around Him are people who want to learn more about God’s message to them.

Note Jesus’ focus on “teaching.” We today need to give that issue much thought. If we merely listen to a sermon, one hour after leaving the church we remember 65% of what we heard — and only 10% by Wednesday evening. If on Sunday morning we participate in a teaching session (especially “visual” teaching with graphic images and teaching pictures), one hour after leaving the church we remember 90% of what we heard and were taught — and by Wednesday evening we remember 65%.

Verse 5:2: Jesus sees two boats resting on the shores of the lake. Those who had been using them are now washing the nets they had been using in their fishing ventures that day.

Verse 5:3: Jesus climbs into one of the boats — the one that Peter had been using — and asks him to take it a short distance out from the shore line. Jesus then sits down in the boat and begins teaching the crowds on the shoreline.

Those who have visited Israel and seen the Sea of Galilee might recall that there are many inlets in that lake’s shoreline. Anyone who sits in a boat and seeks to address people standing on the shoreline will learn that words spoken from the boat will bounce across the sea’s surface and rise up the surface of the nearby shoreline, enhancing the volume like a natural amplification system.

Verses 5:4-5: After completing His teaching, Jesus told Peter to move out further from the shoreline —

and begin fishing once again. Peter points out that the disciples had been doing that prior to taking Jesus on board, but had caught nothing. However, at Jesus’ request, he agrees to begin fishing once again.

Verses 5:6-7: The disciples now catch so many fish that they fear their nets will be damaged. Immediately, they call upon “their partners in the other boat.” Would that this kind of teamwork would be expressed in our own Christian call to be “fishers of men”!

Verses 5:8-9: Peter is so moved by what is taking place that he suggests to Jesus that He move away from him and the other disciples (including James and John, sons of Zebedee). Note that it is not judgment or criticism that moves Peter to confess his sin, rather it is the direct experience of God’s grace.

Verses 5:10-11: Jesus exhorted them to do away with their fear and follow Him! The disciples now do just that!

A clear theme in this story is that Jesus is able to do what we are not. Our human weakness and limitations are seen in contrast to the power of God. But this is a good thing! The message of the gospel is that Christ does for us what we could not do for ourselves!

But that does not mean we are idle. There is work to be done. God uses us as his instruments to accomplish his will. By our servant discipleship, we become the ones through whom God “casts his net” into the world and draws people to himself.

