



"Broken and Blessed"

Luke 5:1-11

Dr. Bill Robinson, President Emeritus, Whitworth University

Guest Preacher on November 6, 2011

Well it is great to be with you. It is great to be worshipping with Bonnie. She is the organist at the First Presbyterian Church in Spokane, so generally if I'm somewhere on the weekends she is home working. It is wonderful to be in your presence. We would travel anywhere to be with Peter & Lorie. We love them and appreciate Peter's leadership at Whitworth [University, Board of Directors] and being in your midst is a privilege. It humbles me to stand and proclaim Christ's Gospel. It is a terrifying privilege and I trust Christ's Holy Spirit will work in you and me for something good.

I have learned three huge lessons through the life of Christ that have had a profound impact on me. The first two I wrote books about. This third one has been influencing me for the last four years and to put it very succinctly it is I am a mess, but I am a bless mess and understanding how to lead in that awareness that I am both messed up and blessed up has been pretty good – it is work. I've become a better leader recognizing those two things I think, I hope.

Studying the life of Jesus is just fascinating and there is so much to be learned. I love this story that we are going to look at this morning. But, I noticed a couple of months ago when I was reading in Luke's Gospel in the second chapter another thing about Jesus that is kind of troubling to me, a little bit disturbing. It is something that I want to share with you. It is from Luke 2. You all know the early part of Luke 2 – the Nativity story. You probably know the end of Luke 2, where Mary and Joseph take Jesus to Jerusalem and then actually lose him thinking that Mary thought Joseph had Jesus when they came back and Joseph that Mary had Jesus when they came back – somehow they misplaced the Son of God. You don't want to do that. But that is what they did.

They go back to Jerusalem to find Jesus. Now we know how that story ends. We all remember how Jesus was in the Temple dazzling the religious leaders. I had always assumed that when they go back there they found him standing in front of the religious leaders with all these people just astonished at Jesus' wisdom. **There are three verbs that Luke uses to describe how Mary and Joseph found Jesus - He was sitting with the religious leaders. He was listening to the religious leaders and he was asking them questions. Sitting, listening asking – what a great way to lay a foundation for leadership.** It doesn't matter if it is leadership in the moment or if it is a leadership career. If we all could learn to sit down, listen and ask some questions before we start making our declarations we would be better leaders even as Jesus was such a great leader.

Jesus was, I hate to use this word, but he was **very patient.** Now I have the gift of hurry and being impatient. My children just reminded me of that within the last forty-eight hours. They said you live life in a hurry. I would have been comforted if the Gospel writers recorded just once instance where Jesus was in a hurry. If they had, I would have found it. I'd look for it. He was annoyingly patient. We waited. We waited thirty years before He began his public ministry and He began His public ministry by going to the wilderness and waiting upon the Lord even more. **This idea of sitting, listening, asking questions and being patient – boy, would we have better leaders if we all began our leadership by doing those things.**

Now, the reason the story that Barbara read this morning from Luke 5 is so fascinating to be is, it is a tipping point story. **Up until this point the disciples are living at home**, they are doing their day jobs. We know this from the fact that at the end of this little narrative they dropped everything and followed. The fact that they were fishing and the fact that we have evidence that they were probably living at home suggests that they had not yet crossed the threshold. They had not yet reaching the tipping point where they said, “Jesus, we’re all in, we’re following you full time now.” We also know that this was not the first miracle that the disciples had witnessed. We know the first miracle took place at the wedding feast in the Cana of Galilee because that is where John records that the Disciples saw and believe that Jesus was the Son of God. We also know that they witnessed a miracle, they were there where in Luke 4 we read that Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. So, this was not the first miracle. It was not like they hadn’t seen a miracle before. They had seen a miracle and there was something about this incident that caused them to say, “We’re following you full time.”

Now, I wouldn’t have wanted to have been Peter explaining to his wife how somehow a fishing miracle was more impressive than healing her mother and that was tipping point, however, that was the situation and that is when Peter, James, John and the disciples drop everything and left. So, **we look at this story in Luke 5 and for me there are five leadership lessons that just stand out.**

Peter invited me to come here this weekend and think with the staff and with some folks last night about ways we can provide more effective leadership. We can provide more effective if we watch our Jesus leads and lead in similar kinds of ways. So, let me just identify five lessons that we can learn from the way Jesus lead in this situation.

First, we find Jesus affirming His disciples. Affirming how they are. It is very interesting to me that Jesus uses a fishing situation, a fishing miracle and a fishing metaphor to call fishermen to follow Him. Jesus works with what we bring Him. Jesus takes who we are and channels that for the Glory of God. It is inspiring to see how Ann and Peggy [Prayer Shawl Ministry] took this passion that they had and channeled it for the Glory of God. **As leaders, we need to work with what people bring us, rather than try to bend people into something they are not or change their passions or their interests.** Jesus channels who we are for His purposes.

We get off to kind of a rough start by having our parents tell us that we can do anything we want if we really try and ask for God’s help. No, we can’t. There are all kinds of things we can’t do. I stood next to John this morning in the first service and I didn’t even want to sing because he sounded so good. I’ll tell you what – I can pray all day and practice all night and I’m still not going to sing like that, that is not my gift. But, as I say, sometimes we’re sort of programmed that way. We’ve got a little three year old grandson who is living with us right now along with his sister and his parents and so we are all under one roof. So, this little guy, somehow one time I was trying to think of something to do that he might enjoy and I remembered as a child the *Little Engine that Could* and it is a nice little story about this blue engine, you know the story that it goes up the side of the mount saying, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.” He summits the mountain and comes down the other side saying, “I thought I could, I thought I could.” My grandson calls it the ‘twain’ who could. He says, “Poppy, read me the twain who could.” Well, I read him the story, but I don’t love the story, because that little blue engine was a switch engine and all that little blue engine did is move big engines around and all the big engines were indisposed that day and so the little blue engine had to go over the mountain. We get the impression from reading this story because he tried so hard, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can” – he had such confidence that he succeeded and you know I suppose it is possible and you don’t want to read your kid the story where the little blue engine is going, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can” – and then “I was wrong, I was wrong, I was wrong – not my gift, I’m the switch engine. What parent is going to read that to a kid, so we

read them these stories that lead children to believe that they can do anything. Now contrast that to the *Veggie Tales* story of David and Goliath – now that is a good story and you don't watch *Veggie Tales* you are missing out and that story where the king offers that little cucumber (David) his armor and David says, "This doesn't fit, it is not me. I am a pretty good shot with this thing, but I don't wear..."

This idea of somehow working with whom God has given us to lead, whether they are our children or whether they are our workers and leading from their strengths and their gifts – affirming them. It is very affirming when we feel the people who lead us acknowledge and recognize our passions, our gifts and our skills.

Then we find Jesus moving on and challenging those disciples to go deeper. First, we find Jesus affirming who they are and then challenging them. Because they have been fishing all night, they are done, the nets are clean, they have no more fishing they want to do and Jesus says, "Let's cast our nets into the deeper water." "Ugh, because you say so and you are the Lord, you know we'll do this," was the response. He challenges them to go deeper. We need to both affirm and challenge that people that God has given us to lead. If we only affirm them, without challenging them, it will become complacent and we won't make the kind of progress capable of being made. On the other had if we only challenge them without affirming them, it will feel as though our leadership is overbearing and we are pushing them, rather than leading them. I love the way Jesus says, "I'm going to take you to the deeper water." That is a part of leadership, taking people to areas where they can't see so clearly, taking them to the deeper waters. Taking them to those places that require faith, that is what good leadership provides.

You know so many times I catch myself praying for clarity. I pray, "Dear Lord, you know (I've done this out loud) I will do this if you will only be clear with me, I promise, you know we well enough, to know I will do it." I wait and I wait for that clarity and I don't get the clarity. I'm thinking, come on, why can't I have the answer. Apparently God prefers me having faith in who he is and God's ability to lead me as I go. I'm sure the Israelites would have loved clarity. I'm sure the Israelites wandering around in the wilderness would have loved a map. They would have love to known exactly where they were going. What did the Israelites get? A cloud. God was in the cloud and they had to have faith in that cloud and dwelt by the living God.

We as leaders need to take those that God gives us to places where faith is required and to challenge them to have that kind of faith.

A third lesson that we learn from this story about **Jesus' leadership is that He united his followers.** Jesus loves when His people come together. We should love it when the people that God gives us to lead come together and our united. Jesus' pray right before His death was, "Lord, that they may be one, that they will unit, they will come together." It is interesting how Jesus pulled that off in the story. Peter must have thought that Jesus was messing with him because he is out there. He has been fishing all night, he has come up blank and now he hits the mother lode and he has all these fish, but the net begins to tear. He has to be think, "Are you kidding me? I get all the fish and now the net tears. Could you not please have included the net in the miracle so that we could transfer the fish from the water into the boat? That would have been nice." Apparently, Jesus thought it was more important for Peter to call for help for the disciples to come together and do this as a team and in a united kind of way.

We need to reward, promote those behaviors where people come together and are united in Christ. This is a plea from the soul of Jesus Christ to His Father that they may be one. For those of you who might have adult children can you imagine something worse than your children dividing and warring among themselves and falling out of relationship with one another. How heart breaking is that to a parent and

how heart breaking it must be to God as God looks upon those who claim Christ as Savior to divide and fight. You don't want that from your children and we are made in the image of God and God does not want that from His children.

Well the **fourth lesson we learn from this is the one that has had such a profound impact on me. Where I realized I'm a blessed mess.** Now, Peter and his buddies see that they have been out fished by a carpenter, which is hard on your pride. Peter comes and just falls at the feet of Jesus and says, "Get away from me Lord, I'm too sinful to be in Your presence." Now, what hit me like a ton of bricks is what Jesus didn't say. Because when I first studied this passage and looked at this carefully, I was feeling a deep sense of inescapable sense of regret. I felt unworthy. I felt unworthy to proclaim Christ's Gospel which my daughter asked me to do at her ordination and this was the passage I had chosen. I felt unworthy to be married to Bonnie Robinson. I felt unworthy to be the father of my children. I felt unworthy to be the President of Whitworth [University]. I could not shake this feeling of unworthiness I had and when I read this passage and when I read Peter crumbled at the knees of Jesus – I could relate, I felt too sinful to be in the presence of Jesus.

Then Jesus did not say to Peter - when Peter makes his confessions - Oh, Peter, you're not so bad, you're being too hard on yourself, you've got low self-esteem, you just need to buck up, you need to you know take better self-esteem lessons, you're fine. No Jesus said just the opposite, He said, "Okay Peter, there you are crumbled before, confessing your sinfulness, from now on you don't have to be afraid. From now on I will make you fishers of people." Are you kidding me? Peter did not get his "from now on" at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee when he declared Jesus as Christ – we read that in John's Gospel. Peter did not get his "from now on" when somehow he confessed to Jesus that Jesus was Lord and that he would follow Him. Peter got his "from now on" when he was in a heap confessing his utter unworthiness to be in Jesus' presence. That apparently is when Jesus had Peter where Peter would hear that His presence was the blessing. Peter was ushered into his blessing through his brokenness and Peter reached a point where Jesus could say, "From now on..." when Peter was feeling as low as he could feel. Jesus showed Peter grace and truth. Grace was that you don't have to be afraid – "I'm going to empower you and make you fishers of people, but you're right, you are sinful. You are unworthy."

As leaders, if we can recognize our brokenness, our frailty, our inadequacy and at the same time recognize that Jesus Christ has given us the blessings of His cross and His Holy Spirit and His presence, only then will we be able to lead honestly and effectively in my opinion. If we feel that we are only blessed and forget that we are broken we will be arrogant, self-reliant, self-serving, we will be unilateral, we will not ask for help because we will be so tickled with ourselves and our own blessings. We have to recognize that we are also broken. If we try to lead only from our brokenness, we would be living in denial of all that Christ has done in our lives. Of Christ's strength, of Christ's gifts to us. Of the power of the Holy Spirit of God we have to embrace the incontestable fact that has Christians we are broken and we are blessed. That is the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

The final lesson we learn from this story is that Jesus empowered His followers. Our job as leaders is not to control our followers, it is not to dictate to our followers, it is not to muscle our followers – it is the opposite – it is to empower our followers. Jesus said, "I will give the authority that God had given to me. I will give that to you. I will make you fishers of people. I will empower you." I love what Jesus said, just hours before His death, his final words to the disciples, "I confer on you a Kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table, in My kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." That is what good leaders do. Great leadership is empowering leadership and Jesus empowered His disciples and they did great things in the name of Christ.

Well the epilog in this story is encouraging. As you know, the disciples left everything and followed, so sitting on that dock were all those fish that they were so exciting about catching and they were gone. Not long after that, the disciples find themselves with more fish than they knew what to do with. They're passing out fish to 5,000 people and they have fish left over and it is prepared and it comes with a side order of bread – everything about that situation was better than all those smelly fish on the dock and they are with Jesus. So often, when we put Christ first in our leadership and in our lives, what we think we are sacrificing will be returned to us in abundance and such it was with the disciples.

My prayer for your today – that as you live and lead in your lives that you will be aware that you are broken, you are frail and that Christ's strength can be made perfect in that weakness, but that you will also be aware that you have been blessed by the power, the blood and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all the gifts of Christ's Holy Spirit so that you will have confidence in your leadership. Be humble. Recognize that your successes come because the gifts you have been given are from Jesus Christ. Be confident. Recognize that the success that you enjoy are because of the gifts from Jesus Christ! What can give us more confidence than that?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.