

This chapter recounts the calling of four of Jesus' disciples while they were involved in their occupation. Jesus makes a dramatic impression on Simon, James and John, who were fishermen, when He performs a fishing miracle before inviting them to follow Him. Later, Jesus simply walks up to Levi (better known as Matthew) at his tax collection booth and issues an invitation to follow Him.

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon [to lie upon; metaph. to be urgent] him to hear the word of God” –

Following the final verse of the previous chapter which stated that Jesus was teaching in the synagogues of Galilee, Luke continues his narrative with an occasion when the people were crowding Jesus because of their desire to hear the word of God.

“he stood by the lake of Gennesaret” – The “lake of Gennesaret” was another name for the Sea of Galilee, also sometimes referred to as the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1). Presumably Jesus was in the land of Gennesaret on the western shore of the lake.

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets. 3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

“And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets” – These fishermen had fished all night (v. 5) and had now anchored their fishing boats at the edge of the lake while they performed the necessary maintenance on their nets in preparation for the next night of fishing.

“And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's” – Jesus boarded one of the ships, which “happened” to be Simon Peter's. Jesus never does anything by chance.

“and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship” – Jesus asked Simon to move the boat so that it was floating just offshore. It was from here that He sat down (as was customary for a Rabbi) to teach the people. Knowing that His voice would carry better over the surface of the water, Jesus used the boat as a platform from which to teach the people so that they could better hear Him speak.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught [catch]” – When Jesus had finished teaching the people, He made a strange request of Simon. Jesus, Who was not a fisherman, was advising Simon, who was a fisherman, to lower his nets to catch fish in the day time, typically the worst time to go fishing.

“And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing” – Fishing on the lake was typically done at night because the fish would come closer to the surface when it was cool. The heat of the day was usually the worst time to try to catch fish. Simon pointed out that that they had already fished all night when conditions were best to catch fish and had caught nothing, so it was unlikely that fishing during the worst time would produce better results.

“nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” – Simon decided to do as Jesus instructed simply because of His respect for Him as a teacher of God's word, as implied by the word “Master” (the Greek word refers to any superintendent or overseer). He was acknowledging Jesus' authority as a Man of God.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7 And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

“And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake” – Obviously Jesus wanted to make an impression on Simon because He supernaturally caused a great multitude of fish to be passing under the boat when the fishermen had deployed their net. The catch was so large that their net began breaking under the weight of the fish.

“And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them” – Simon knew they needed help to not lose the fish or their net. The other boat was apparently still anchored at the shore, but Simon and his shipmates were able to get their attention and summoned them to come help.

“And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink” – Not only were the nets beginning to fail, but the boats began to sink from the weight of the fish.

8 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

“When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” – Simon realized that what he was witnessing could only have come from God and he was overcome with a sense of his own unworthiness. We often sense our own sinfulness when we recognize God's presence. Such was the case with Isaiah when he had a vision of God (Isa. 6:5).

“For he was astonished [to be seized with amazement], and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken” – What Simon considered to be the worst time to fish actually produced the largest catch of fish he had ever seen. He knew that this had to be a miracle from God and he was unworthy to stand in the presence of Jesus.

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

“And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon” – James and John, the partners in the other boat (v. 7), were just as amazed as Simon, and likely had similar feelings of sinfulness and unworthiness (v. 8).

“And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men” – Jesus assures Simon and the other two men that they had nothing to fear. Jesus is in the business of redeeming those who are unworthy because of their sin. He was calling them into a ministry where, instead of fish, they would be catching men for the kingdom of God.

“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him” – Jesus had made such an impression that they were willing to forsake their own livelihood in order to follow Him. James and John even left their father Zebedee behind to follow Jesus (Mark 1:20).

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13 And he put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

In one of the cities that Jesus visited, a man who had leprosy covering his entire body saw Him and immediately fell on his face in humility. The man believed that Jesus had the ability to heal Him if He wanted to do so. Many commentators believe that the man questioned Jesus’ willingness to heal, but it may be that the man was humbly asking Jesus for healing instead of demanding it. Jesus demonstrated His compassion by immediately responding that He was indeed willing and then cleansed the man of his leprosy.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Jesus was already attracting a lot of attention, making it difficult to minister from town to town. It seems that He did not want the additional publicity that would happen if the man spread the word of what happened to him. Instead, Jesus instructs the man to obey the law of Moses and show himself to the priest and make an offering to thank God for the cleansing. According to Mark’s gospel, the man ignored Jesus’ command to be quiet and Jesus was forced to remain outside the city (**Mark 1:45** *“But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter”*).

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Jesus’ fame kept growing and large numbers of people came to hear Him preach/teach and to be healed. The crowds likely made it difficult for Him to find time and a secluded place to pray. He would often have to go away from people into the wilderness to do so.

Verses 17-26: Jesus was teaching inside a crowded house when men brought a paralytic man to be healed. When they were finally able to get the man in front of Him, Jesus said to the man “Your sins are forgiven.” The scribes and Pharisees immediately believed that Jesus was blaspheming because only God could forgive sins. To prove that He indeed was capable of forgiving sins, Jesus proceeded to heal the man physically as well.

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

Tax collectors were considered the worst-of-the-worst when it came to sinners. However, it seems that Jesus did not have a discussion with Levi (also known as Matthew) to convince Him of the merits of following Him. He simply said “Follow Me” and Levi immediately abandoned his job to follow Jesus.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

Levi apparently was so thrilled that Jesus called him as a follower that he threw a great feast in Jesus’ honor. Levi invited all his friends and coworkers to come and meet Jesus (Matt. 9:10 and Mark 2:15 describe the “others” with the generic term “sinners”). The scribes and Pharisees, who were always looking for a reason to condemn Jesus, complained to the disciples that Jesus was having fellowship with publicans and sinners, the kind of people that were considered to have the lowest morals in Jewish society. They believed that no self-respecting Jew should hang around with such people of ill repute.

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The scribes and Pharisees prioritized separation from sinful people but Jesus’ priority was reaching such people with the gospel so that they could be redeemed. Applying the metaphor of a doctor to Himself, His focus would naturally be on the “sick” (those who needed His spiritual healing). These sinners needed to repent of their sins and Jesus was spending time with them to help guide them to salvation.