

Personal Holiness - Part 6

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, trust, and humility in following Jesus and launching out into the deep, even when it's difficult or uncertain.

Duration: 34:42

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 4:18-19, Luke 2:8-9, Luke 5:4, Luke 5:8, Luke 5:11, Acts 5:41

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of giving back to the Lord and how everything we have comes from Him. He emphasizes the importance of launching out into the deep and not staying in the shallow waters of life to avoid problems. The preacher also highlights the reaction of Simon Peter when he saw the glory of Jesus, realizing his own unworthiness. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the tragedy of a wasted life and the need to translate the teachings into action.

Transcript

Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. When they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes and their nets break.

That is, their nets were breaking. It really means their nets began to break. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other boat, that they should come and help them.

And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him at the draft of the fishes which they had taken.

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. It says in the Revised Version, Margin, from henceforth thou shalt take men alive.

When they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him. Now I'd like you to use a little sanctified imagination today and picture yourself by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Galilee is a little bigger than Coronet.

It's about seven miles across and about 12 miles from north to south, and it's shaped like a fiddle. And I have no doubt that the Lord and the disciples were up toward the north, because that's where Capernaum

was, and that's where most of the cities that they worked in were located. And you have a very interesting scene here at the beginning of the chapter.

The people were pressing. Jesus was there with his disciples, and the people were pressing upon him to hear the word of God. I like that.

It's really nice when people are hungry for the word of God. Why do you think they were pressing on the Lord Jesus to hear the word of God? Well, I'll tell you one thing. He spoke with authority and not as did the scribes and the Pharisees.

The scribes and the Pharisees peddled a secondhand religion. But when the Lord Jesus spoke, there was a dynamic to it. There was a life to it.

There was a force to it, and people recognized it and could hear it. Isn't it sad to so many people today in the world going as it were to hear the word of the gulf of bread and they get a stone? Jesus never disappointed anyone like that, anyone like that. They went the word of God, and that's exactly what they heard.

It reminds me of what Spurgeon said once to his students. He said, Get on fire for God, and the world will turn out to see you burn. And I think that's what was happening here.

The people recognized that the Lord Jesus was someone different, and his fame was spreading abroad, and they wanted to hear what he had to say. Now it says in the next verse that the disciples were that these fishermen were washing their nets. He saw two boats standing by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and they were washing their nets.

Why were they washing their nets? Well, because if they didn't, the nets would rot. There's a certain amount of preventive maintenance that you have to take in every type of work, and I think that's true in Christian life and service too, isn't it? There's a sense in which we have to keep our nets clean. We have to keep our lives clean.

We have to keep feeding on the word of God. We have to keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I liken that to the washing of the net here. But isn't it remarkable to find that the people were so enthusiastic to be near the Lord Jesus, they were pressing upon him that he finally got into Simon's boat and said to Simon, thrust out from the land.

They were actually pushing him, as it were, into the water, and so here he is sitting in Simon's boat. One of the lovely things that I noticed in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, the unconventional pulpits. They really didn't do it exactly the way we do it today.

We have these nicely polished pulpits, and we have our church buildings with the pews all facing front and all the rest, but oftentimes the marketplace was a pulpit. Very often prisons were the pulpit. Wherever people congregated and were willing to listen to the word of God, that was a pulpit.

I like it. I like to think of the Lord Jesus sitting in that boat, using it as a pulpit. I've often told the story of being in Nazareth, Israel one time, and there's a hospital there, a Christian hospital.

It's run for Arabs, not for Jews, and one night they asked me to speak to the doctors and the nurses and the staff, and they have a little chapel in the ground, and when you go into the chapel and get up to speak,

you're not standing behind a pulpit. You're standing behind a carpenter's bench. Mind you, it's a beautiful carpenter's bench.

It's well varnished, and at the end there's a wooden vise attached to it, and what they're trying to do is remind you that the Lord Jesus lived in Nazareth years ago, and that his pulpit there was a carpenter's bench. I like it. Isn't it wonderful to think of the Lord Jesus working in a carpenter's shop there in Nazareth and witnessing for God, being faithful to God in all things.

Someone has suggested that if there had been a sign over his shop, it probably would have said, My yoke fits well. Well, whether there was such a sign or not, I don't know, but I know his yoke fits well. Jesus is in Simon's boat.

Simon little thought that day when he made his boat available to the Lord Jesus that some folks at Lake Koronas a couple of thousand years later would be talking about it. To me that's one of the exciting things about the Christian life when we're walking with the Lord, and when what we are have is turned over for his use. You never know when the day dawns what history is going to be made that day.

What do you have to give to the Lord? Simon gave his boat that day, and Jesus used it. They're still talking about it. It's recorded in the annals of heaven.

Do you have something you could give to the Lord? To me that's another exciting aspect of the Christian life, how everything we have comes from the Lord anyway, and we have the privilege of giving it back to him and seeing him use it in a wonderful way. And it says in verse four, when he had left speaking, he said to Simon, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft. Launch out into the deep.

And I think there's a sense in which the Lord Jesus says that to us today. You know, it's possible for us to avoid a multitude of troubles by living in the shallows all our lives. Do you ever think of that? We can just stay in the shallow water and there are very few problems there.

Jesus says launch out into the deep. What deep? Well, it could mean the deep of faith, couldn't it? In the life of faith you can go up to your toes, you can go up to your ankles, you can go up to your knees, you can go up to your thighs, you can swim in it. According to your faith, be it unto you.

I've often told about a young fellow with O.M. that said to me once, Mr. McDonald, I see that it's very hard to live a life of faith in the United States. You have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God, where if God fails you, you're sunk. If you do that, he said, there'll be a power in your life and when you touch other lives, something will happen for God.

That's launching out into the deep. Launching out into the deep. Working hard for the supply of your present needs and the needs of your family.

Putting everything above that in the work of the Lord and trusting God for the future. That's launching out into the deep. There are deeps of experience in the Christian life.

There are deeps of trials. Humanly speaking, we don't want them. And I want to tell you, it's in the deep places of life that the fruitfulness lies.

They found that here, didn't they? As long as they stayed in the shallows, they didn't catch anything. Jesus said, launch out of the deep and let down your nets for a draft. And many of us have proved that true by

experience.

I thank God for the bitter things. They've been a friend to grace. They've driven me from the paths of ease to storm the secret place.

Since we've last met, some of you have been through deep waters. Some of you have been wondering at God's weaving, at learning that not till the loom is silent and the shuttle cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why the dark threads were as needful in the weaver's skillful hands as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he had planned. Launch out into the deep.

I really think there's a sense in which God is calling us to do that. We hug our lives and spend our time in protectionism. And all the time Jesus is saying, he that loveth his life shall lose it.

He that loses his life for my sake and the gospel shall find it. I love it when Jesus says, launch out in the deep and let down your nets for a draft. What does it mean? It means that my savior is omniscient.

It means he has perfect knowledge. Isn't that marvelous? He has knowledge of where all the schools of fish are in the sea of Galilee. He has knowledge of where the spirit of God is brooding over areas in the world today, where the fruit is ripe for picking.

How important it is to be in touch with the Lord Jesus. Listening to him. Simon comes back to him and says, Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing, nothing.

Think of that. Think of all the times they had let down their nets during the night and they hadn't caught a single fish. That was phenomenal.

How sad that is in life. I think of the 75 year old woman who said, I am 75 and I have done nothing with my life. We have toiled all night and have caught nothing.

One of the greatest tragedies is a tragedy of a wasted life. Toiled all night. There couldn't be anything worse for a real fisherman to work all night and have nothing to show for it.

Absolutely nothing. What a disgrace to go back to the dock and the people waiting there. How did you do? Not a single fish because we're toiled all night and have caught nothing.

Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net. And here it is a very remarkable thing where you find a fisherman listening to the advice of a carpenter. It shows you the value of being teachable.

It shows you the value of humility. It shows you the value of realizing that we can learn from everyone. I have to remind myself of that all the time.

There isn't a Christian in the world that I can't learn something from. We are all members of a body. It doesn't make any difference what our denominational designations might be.

Those who are truly born again through faith in the Lord Jesus are all members of the body of Christ. And every member has something to contribute to that body. There are Christian friends I might not agree with doctrinally, and yet I love them for their warmth, for their deal, for their enthusiasm for God, for the love that they manifest to others.

Peter displayed that humility and that teachableness that he was willing to listen to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. And it's a good thing he did, isn't it? He let down the net, and it said when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fish so that the net, the nets were breaking. It says, and they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other boat that they should come and help.

I like this, cooperation in the work of God. They didn't say, look, this is our private hall. We don't want anyone else to share the glory of it.

We've never had a day fishing like this before, and we want to get the credit. Is that what they said? No, they didn't say that. They had really hit Peter today, and they called to their partners to help.

The wonderful thing to work cooperatively in the work of the Lord, isn't it? Anybody can be a freelance. Anybody can go his own way, do his own thing, but it really takes grace to work with others, to share the blessing with others. So their friends came and helped them, and they pulled in the nets, and the nets were filled with fish, and the nets were breaking, and the ships began to sink, the boats began to sink.

That reminds me that there are problems in the Christian life and in Christian service, but what wonderful problems they are. These were the best problems those fishermen ever had, breaking nets and sinking boats, and they never complained about it either. There are problems in the Christian life.

The Lord never said there wouldn't be problems. He never said it would get easier. He said it would get better, that's all.

And it does. It shines more and more unto the perfect day. To me, that's beautiful.

He says that the Christian life starts off like the dawning of the day, and then the sun rises and gets brighter and brighter all the time until noon, the height of the day. The path of the justice is the shining light shineth more and more unto the perfect day. So let's not be afraid of problems.

One of our great industrialists said, problems are the price of progress. Don't bring me anything but problems. Good news weakens me.

I didn't hear any amens, but it's still amenable. They came and filled both the boats, so they began to sink. This is an interesting reaction.

You have in verse 8, when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man of the Lord. What ever happened? Well, I would suggest to you that what happened was that Peter got a vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus. And when you see the glory of Christ, you realize your own insignificance and your own unworthiness.

To me, that's one of the paradoxes of the Christian life, that the closer you are to Jesus, the more sensitive you are of your own utter unworthiness. As you get away from Jesus, you begin to think you're pretty good. It's the old story, it takes a straight line to reveal a crooked line.

You'd never know a crooked line if you didn't know a straight line, would you? Here's the straight line. I put myself up next to it and see how crooked I am. And Jesus is that straight line.

And here, the Lord Jesus had manifested himself as the omniscient Lord of glory. And Peter began to wither. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.

It's a wonderful thing to have a vision of God, isn't it? Isaiah had. The year that King Uzziah died, he saw the Lord high and lifted up in his train, filled the temple. And Isaiah said, woe is me, for I am undone, a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Why? Why did he say it? Because mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord. Simon was overcome. Jesus said to Simon, from henceforth you will take men alive.

I suppose up to this time in their lives, one of the greatest things for them was to take fish alive. And it is fun taking fish alive too, isn't it? But just think by contrast of what it means to take a man alive. Just think what a privilege it is to be used of God in the salvation of a soul.

And that soul becomes a worshiper of the Lamb of God for all eternity. He saved himself. He's eternally secure in Christ, and he's there in heaven conformed to the image of Christ, worshiping him forever.

Beats all the fish in the Sea of Galilee. And of course, that was the vision that these fellows had. Don't forget, these were Jewish fellows, you know.

And when they looked at those silver fish in the Sea of Galilee, they instinctively thought of another kind of silver. And they had developed a marvelous chemistry of taking silver fish and converting them into silver money. And I think that's why Jesus said to them one day, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own life? What shall a man give in exchange for his life? It's like saying, supposing you could get every fish out of the Sea of Galilee and convert every one of them to gold, what good would it do you if you lost your life in the process? And we have to remind ourselves of that constantly.

It's possible to go through life with your soul saved and your life lost. And that's what Jesus was trying to save them from. I should have mentioned in going along here something that to me is very beautiful.

When they pulled in those fish, they couldn't take credit for the whole. And I like to think that that's true in Christian work. You know, we hear so much boasting in Christian work.

But actually, in true work for God, there's no really ground for boasting. They could no more take credit for catching these fish than they could for the color of their eyes. It was the Lord that did it.

It was the Lord that directed them where to let down their net. And all they did was pull in the net. I really loathe this scramble for numbers in evangelical Christianity, numbers saved by an individual and so forth.

In true work for God, there's no ground for boasting. God will not share his glory with another. I chuckled the other day when a man said praise is okay as long as you don't inhale it.

From henceforth, you will take men alive. I think it's very significant that the Lord Jesus came to these fellows when they were right in the midst of their regular employment. I think that the Lord sanctified our daily employment with a halo of glory.

I really do. Once again, I love to think that my Savior came into the world and that he was a carpenter. Apostle Paul was a tent maker.

And it says we're going through the daily round of life. The visions of glory come to us. It says the shepherds were out on the sides of Bethlehem, that the heavens were open and the angelic voices came to them.

I'm getting tired of this business of staying out with these dumb sheep on the hillside. I'm going into Bethlehem for some pizza. If he had said that he would have missed the angelic visitation, he really would have.

God ships in motion, doesn't he? It's when we're busy glorifying his name that he leads us on to other things. Now, I think it's interesting here. He said to Simon, Fear not.

From henceforth, I shall catch men. And then it goes on to say, and when they had brought their ships to land, they first took all and followed him. He called Simon and he got a bunch.

You know, the power of example is wonderful. Simon stepped forth to follow the Lord and the others followed. Do you ever think somebody might be waiting for you to take a step of faith? And if you take it, they'll follow.

Sometimes if a father steps out and trusts Christ as Savior, his sons are quick to follow him. I think that's very often the case. All three forsook all and followed him.

I wonder, did you ever think that God might be calling you to do to do this? I think one of the most thrilling things about this whole story is that it was on the best business day of their lives that they left, that they forsook all to follow Jesus. I'm glad they didn't do it after Simon said, Master, we've toiled all night and have taken nothing. I've tried fishing and I failed.

So I went, I became a plumber and I failed. No, I decided that I was an electronics man and I failed. So I better go into the work of the Lord.

That isn't the way that was not the scenario here. They came. You might say they came to the height of their career.

They heard the voice of Christ. They responded to the voice as they followed him. And I'd like to suggest to you today, there's something uncommonly fine to see men and women, young men and young women who have achieved and to see them bringing their finest talent, their finest gift, the very best they have and laying them at the purest feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that makes an impact on other Christians. That makes an impact on the world as well. Could be that somebody is here in that situation.

You've reached the apex, you've climbed the ladder, the degree, the award, the cup and all the rest. And you hear the voice of Jesus call, come follow. And you say, we're the whole realm of nature mind that we're an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, so have my soul, my life, my all. And it really is no great sacrifice. You can't think in terms of sacrifice in connection with the call of Christ.

I think it was Amy Carmichael who said, I heard his call, come follow. That was all. My earthly goal grew dim.

My soul went after him. I rose and followed. That was all.

Who would not follow if they heard his call? Little did they ever dream that day when they started out in the boat for the draft of fishes that before the day was over, the whole direction of their life would be changed.

And they start out to taking men alive rather than taking fish alive. I don't know why we think it's such a great, great step when people do this for the Lord.

After all, he gave all for us. If Jesus Christ died for me, the least I could do would be to live for him. If he purchased me on the cross of Calvary, then I belong to him.

I don't belong to myself. And if I take my life and use it the way I want to live it, then I'm a thief taking something that doesn't belong to me. Oh, Christ, I'm bleeding hands and feet.

I sacrifice for me. Each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for thee. Notice they forsook all.

That's not very popular doctrine today. And yet it's what Jesus taught, isn't it? If any man comes to me and forsakes not father and mother, brother, sister, wife, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And oftentimes there has to be the severing of tender earthly ties to walk out in obedience to the call of Christ.

I've often mentioned the story of Isabel Kuhn and her mother, Isabel Kuhn, lived in Canada. Her mother was the chairperson of the Ladies Missionary Society, and she spent an awful lot of her time collecting money for missions and sending supplies out to missions and all the rest. And one day Isabel came and said to her mother, Mother, God has called me to be a missionary.

And she said over my dead body. Contrast that with Spurgeon, who said to his son, My son, if God should call you to serve him on the mission field, I would not like to see you dribble down into a king. I think Spurgeon had 20, 20 vision, don't you? Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And he did. On the day of Pentecost, he let down the net and brought in a great draft, 3,000 souls on the day of Pentecost. Wow.

That beats fishing on the Sea of Galilee all to pieces, doesn't it? No one's ever the loser for obeying the call of Christ. When they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him. I just like to quote by saying that I believe there's a sense in which the Lord called every one of us.

If we don't respond to that call, if we just hug our lives, he'll get others to follow him, but we'll never get a better Christ to follow. It's just as simple. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for these times that we spent together at Corona's.

We thank you for stirring up our minds by way of remembrance. We pray that we might be able to translate into action the things that we've heard. We, we really believe that just as you were by Blue Galilee many years ago, you're by Blue Corona's today, looking for those who will step out, who launch out into the deep, looking for those who appreciate something of the irrelevancy of so much of modern life, looking for those who want their lives to count for time and for eternity, and your call is going out.

Father, we pray that some who are at the very peak of their careers might hear the call, might respond to that call, and that others might be heartened to do likewise when they see a man with the finest talents laying them at the Savior's feet. Lord, we just pray that you'll give each one of us a sensitive heart to hear your voice and more than anything else in the world to want to do the thing that pleases you. Dismiss us with your blessing, we pray.

We're going to be traveling, Lord, and we need you. We just pray for your protecting hand upon us, and in the days ahead, Lord, we pray that we might live lives of holiness, that men may take knowledge of us that we've been with Jesus. We ask in his worthy name and for his faith.

Amen.

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