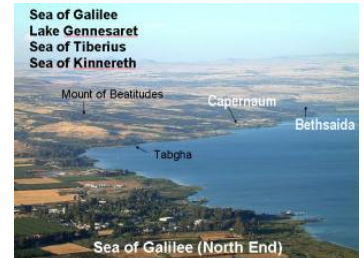


I. Introduction

Good morning! In the NIV Bible, the Sea of Galilee is also called Lake Gennesaret, the Sea of Tiberius, and the Sea of Kinnereth. We won't go into the reasons for these various names, but when we remember that the Bible covers hundreds of years of history, it is not surprising that the names of places sometimes changed. Regardless of which name is used, the Sea of Galilee is very important to us because Jesus spent a lot of time ministering in the towns surrounding this lake, and along its shore.



In the photo, the locations of the towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida are marked. As you can see, these towns are quite close to each other, I think that you could easily walk from one to the other in an hour or so. Last week we saw how Peter invited Jesus to his home in Capernaum. But from John 1:44, we know that Peter and his brother Andrew, and also Philip, were originally from Bethsaida. And, it is likely that Bethsaida was also the hometown of James and John, the Sons of Zebedee. These men knew each other before they met Jesus, probably from childhood. Peter may have moved to Capernaum after getting married. Since we saw last week that Peter's mother-in-law is in the same home, it is even possible that Peter may have moved in with his wife's parents.

The events of today's Scripture passage occur somewhere along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum and Bethsaida. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were working together in the fishing business. From the gospel of John, we know that they knew Jesus well by this time. They had listened to His teaching. They had seen various miracles. They had even traveled with Jesus to some of the other towns. However, they kept going back to fishing. But that is about to end. Let's read Luke 5:1-16.

II. Scripture Luke 5:1-16

[1] One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, [2] he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. [3] He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. [4] When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." [5] Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." [6] When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. [7] So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. [8] When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" [9] For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, [10] and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." [11] So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

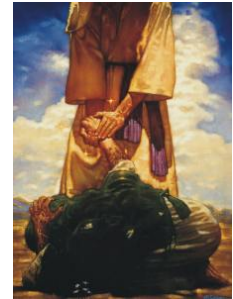
[12] While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." [13] Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. [14] Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." [15] Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. [16] But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

III. Teaching

When people meet Jesus, their lives change. In this passage, fishermen gave up on fishing, and a leper was cleansed - big changes in people's lives. My life has also changed in many ways since I met Jesus, and I bet yours has as well. Jesus loves us just as we are. But that doesn't mean that Jesus will leave us unchanged. No! Because of His great love for us, Jesus will bring many changes into our lives. Some of these changes are brought about by miracles, like the healing of the leper. Some are brought about by the commands of Jesus, like when He says, "Follow me." Others come when we notice how Jesus lived. For example, **Luke 5:16** says, "**But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.**" Perhaps this will inspire us to make time for prayer in our busy lives as well.



The leper came seeking Jesus and asking for healing. And, Jesus healed him with a loving word and a gentle touch. Jesus was always ready to touch the people that society feared or rejected. In Israel, no one touched lepers. But Jesus did. Jesus reached out and laid His hand on the leper and said, "**Be clean,**" and the leprosy was gone. **Luke 5:14**, "**Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."**"



I imagine that there was quite a commotion when the man showed up at the temple in Jerusalem and told the priests that he had been healed of leprosy. The entire Old Testament records only two cases of lepers being healed (Miriam in Numbers 12 and Naaman in 2 Kings 5). The priests probably had to go review Leviticus 14 to remember what the appropriate sacrifice was; they didn't get to perform the ritual of thanksgiving for the healing of a leper very often! In fact, the Jewish teachers taught that only the Messiah would be able to heal lepers. Because of this, the high priest would certainly be called to come and see the healed leper. Jesus told the man to be silent on the way, but as soon as the priest verified the miracle, all of Jerusalem would certainly hear the news. Jesus sent the healed leper to go and give a testimony to the priests at the temple that the Messiah had come.

Sadly, the priests at the temple would eventually reject Jesus. Even though Jesus performed the signs that had long been recognized as proof of the Messiah's coming. Jesus would be rejected because He did not fit their ideas of what the Messiah should be like. They longed for a Messiah that would free Israel from the rule of the Roman Empire, but Jesus refused to be a political or military Messiah. And so, they eventually demanded that Jesus be crucified.



The priests would reject Jesus, but the fishermen of Galilee would accept Him. Four fishermen from Galilee would be among the first to believe in Jesus and to follow Him. They would be numbered among the twelve apostles who turned the world upside down with the Good News of the coming of the Savior, the Messiah - our Lord Jesus Christ. The names of the fishermen brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John will never be forgotten. Jesus took ordinary men and transformed them into extraordinary men. Perhaps you consider yourself to be quite an ordinary man or woman. But perhaps Jesus is just waiting for the right moment to do something extraordinary in your life. If He calls your name, will you be ready to answer?



One day Jesus was preaching to crowds of people along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd was pressing in tight, so Jesus decided to get into a boat that was on the shore. Jesus' voice would have carried well over the water and the people would have been able to hear for a long ways. We don't know exactly what Peter's boat looked like, but it might have been something like this one. This is a model based on the remains of a 1st century boat that was found buried in the mud of the Sea of Galilee.



Luke 5:4-5, "**When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."**"

Simon, soon to be renamed as Peter, and his partners had worked hard all night fishing. But they had caught nothing. They had been listening to Jesus' message, but basically they were tired and discouraged men who just wanted to go home and rest. But Jesus was interested in more than teaching to crowds. Jesus cares about crowds. But Jesus also cares about individuals. And on this day, Jesus was determined to catch a fisherman named Simon. Jesus spoke to Simon, and Simon agreed to let the nets down again because Jesus asked. But Simon must have been thinking, *"I am the fisherman. Jesus is a carpenter and sometimes a preacher. What does Jesus know about fishing?"*

It turns out that Jesus knew more about fishing than Simon imagined. Jesus knew exactly where the fish were. At Jesus' command, they went out into the deep water and Simon let down the nets. **Luke 5:6-7, "When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink."**



This is a story about fishing, a story about the calling of the disciples, and also a story that speaks about the work of the church in reaching out to the people of the world. When Peter let down the nets at Jesus' command, the nets were filled with fish. In the church, when we listen to the Jesus and obey His voice, we see the fruit of the ministry grow. Peter needed help; the nets were too full for him to bring in alone. In the church also we need help to do the work, we need to work together as partners for the Kingdom of God. Too often, a few people are struggling with a heavy load while others are sitting and watching. If you are bearing a heavy load, call out to your brothers and sisters and ask for help. If you are sitting while others are working, look around and see where you might be able to lend a hand. The work of the church belongs to all of us, not just to a few. We are all partners in the Kingdom of God fishing business.

Luke 5:8, "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"" Simon had listened to Jesus teach. Simon had seen Jesus cast out demons and heal the sick, including his own mother-in-law. Simon knew that John the Baptist had called Jesus, **(John 1:29b), "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** But when Simon saw Jesus provide a miraculous catch of fish, something in Simon's heart changed. Suddenly Simon knew that Jesus was holy. Suddenly Simon remembered his own sins. Suddenly it all became real to Simon.

Simon's reaction might seem surprising, But I think I know what Simon was feeling. If Jesus knew where the fish were hiding in the dark depths of the sea, then Jesus also surely knew the dark places of sin in Simon's heart. Imagine for a moment that you are standing naked in a dark place, believing that you are alone and hidden. But suddenly a bright light is turned on and you see that everyone is looking at you. I think that is what Simon felt, shame at his nakedness before Jesus, the light of the world. Simon wanted Jesus to turn the light off, **"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"** But Jesus had other plans. Instead of turning the light off, Jesus was going to take away Simon's sins away and clothe Simon in robes of righteousness, so that Simon would never have to be ashamed again.

Jesus isn't very interested in helping us hide our sins. But He is interested in forgiving our sins, cleansing us and making us whole. Do you remember what the leper said to Jesus in **Luke 5:12? "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."** In that time, leprosy was a symbol of sin. Lepers were considered to be unclean, and they were despised. Simon Peter's sin was hidden in his heart, but the leper's disease was visible to all. The leper asked for help. Simon Peter confessed that he was a sinner. And Jesus was ready and willing to meet their needs. **Luke 5:13, "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him."**

IV. Conclusion

And Jesus refused to leave Simon, but instead, in **Luke 10b-11**, we read, **"Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."** The disciples left their old lives behind in order to follow Jesus. But what happened to all



the fish they had caught? It was probably the greatest catch of fish the men had ever had. I think this catch was left for the men's families as proof to them of God's love and provision for their needs. If you choose to follow Jesus, you don't have to worry about what will become of your family. God loves them and God will provide for them. And Peter and the disciples returned to see their families and care for them on many occasions. But the center of their lives had shifted. Now their lives were centered on Jesus.

Jesus alone is a worthy center for our lives. Jesus is worthy of worship. He is worthy of following. Whatever your need is this morning, Jesus is ready and willing to help. He is ready to forgive your sins, to cleanse you, and to give you a new life. Jesus called Peter and the others out of the fishing business and into full-time ministry as fishers of men. Jesus calls us all to love others and to minister in His name. But Jesus will not necessarily call you to leave your job and travel far away. A lot of times, the best place for you to fish is right where you work and live.

V. Closing Prayer