

**Sermon: Catch of the day.** February 9, 2025 - Luke 5:1-11

**Prayer:** Gracious God and Creator your majesty extends beyond all we can imagine. Yet, you are as close as our very breath. Surprise us with the catch of today. Help us to love others as you first loved us. Amen

**Introduction:** The photos: The Sea of Galilee, Lake Genesaret, Tiberias, known as Northern Israel and the fishing boat.

For those who are seafood lovers whenever you are at a restaurant and you opened the menu you look for the **“Catch of the day.”** Sometimes it is sea bass, salmon, tilapia, or a mixture of seafood. If the catch of the day suits your appetite then you are ready to order and dig in deep.

Some of us like to tell fishing stories to our friends, children and grandchildren. Some of you love fishing as a hobby and perhaps some of you have been part of the fishing industry for your livelihood. I do not like fishing. I don't have the patience to hold a fish line out or go out into the deep waters with a net. But I love seafood and grew up eating lots of it because my dad was a fisherman. Guyana is known as the land of many waters so lots of fishing happens everywhere.

The fun about fishing stories is that each time someone tells this exciting tale of one's catch of the day you kind of open your hands wider. The first time you told or heard the story the fish was ten inches long and weighed ten pounds. The next time the story is told the fish grew to twenty inches and so on and on. Fishing brings a great deal of satisfaction to people. The experience is refreshing, calms tiredness and relaxes the mind. Fishing could be a time of personal reflection and the solitude breathes new life. My son loves fishing.

My late dad fished in the rivers and tributaries in Guyana but not out into the sea. His years of fishing included aquarium fish for export in the early years of my childhood. He caught all kinds of fish. Fishing was part of his livelihood and I remembered many of those stories.

One of my favourite memories is the time when my dad brought home a Himara fish that weighed thirty-two pounds. The Himara is a freshwater fish and it is rare delicacy found in the Amazon region. People would go deep into the jungle of Guyana to find this fish in the rivers. But the significant memory of this story is that my dad did not catch this fish with a baited fish line or a trap or a net. My dad speared the fish. It takes precision, patience and balance to stand in a canoe and hold this huge fish down in the water.

I recalled the excitement that night as the community gathered to hear the story over and over again. I told this story at my late dad's funeral and some of his younger friends who were there said to me this story is still a legend in the rural community. I told a great legend but today the fish are caught before they can grow to that size. Across the world climate change is affecting the natural order to creation.

Today's story is about fishing with Jesus in the deep waters. Jesus used an everyday experience of ordinary people to share the kingdom of God. Jesus invites us to seek out the catch of the day. Does it mean **"bringing people to a relationship with Jesus?"** **How do we do that today?** . We could think of ourselves as the ones casting the nets. We spread the word far and wide

hoping that we will bring in another huge catch like that day at Gennesaret. It's easier said but not all so easy to do.

Or we could think of ourselves as the net. We are God's channels intertwined with gifts and the voices to gather others into relationship with Jesus. Another thought is to consider ourselves as bait. We know that many decades ago the church grew when babies were born into the fellowship. New disciples are brought into the life of the church through existing families. Sometimes new disciples become part of the fellowship because something attracts them. Is it some kind of bait? What is it? **Often it is you and me.**

Four out of five new church members say they decided to join the church for worship with an invitation of a friend or a relative. Consider we are the bait, good or ill. Jesus invites us to launch out into the deep but make sure the **water is warm!** We are prepared to share the good news that God's love and grace is for everyone. All are welcome into worship! We know there are people who are hurting and people who want to hear some good news.

I made a follow-up call with a member of a previous congregation, following her late husband's funeral service. During our conversation she told me that one of her co-workers listened to the funeral service that was live-streamed for her late husband. Her friend confessed that she had not been to church for a very long time. But after listening to the service, prayers, music, God's word written and spoken, she was moved by the Spirit. She acknowledged it is time to return to her church. Sometimes God uses us in situations that we can never imagine. Even in deep waters such as death and sorrow, God's word is the *catch of the day*.

Throughout Christian history we understood that our call is to people. We are entrusted with a ministry of building relationship with God. The spiritual practices of prayers, sacraments, and Word are to save lives. These practices keep us connected with the warmth of God's love. We are to help someone to find that spiritual renewal with God.

Do you remember a time when you felt like you have been fishing in murky waters? Life was filled with uncertainties that you cannot see a clear spot to cast a net out. You recall a time when the water is so deep you thought the boat you are traveling in will sink. The financial situation seems difficult and God seems to set you adrift out into the deep. Perhaps you have seen someone hit ground bottom due to addiction, illness or financial loss.

Simon Peter said we have been fishing all day and night and caught nothing. What else can we do? He was reluctant with doubt but somehow the voice of Jesus stirred his heart to **try again**. Have you noticed that two boats went out into the sea and two boats were filled with fish beyond imagination?

At times our personal and church situations may seem hopeless. We have tried it all, exhausted from trying and want to run away. The water is too deep, murky and conflicting tides are floating around. The water that used to be clear and inviting seems to be fill with too much stuff and it becomes impossible to even try again. You know what I am talking about. Then what can I do?

Peter said I have tried all night Lord. Please don't let me do it again.

Jesus interrupts and surprises us. Out of nothing something new begins bubbling, multiplying, expanding, growing, producing and evolving into something only God knows. The disciples were willing to take the risk and to trust God. We are call to do the same. With Jesus there is no scarcity only **abundance**.

Hear the good news: “If you say so Jesus,” we surrender to the catch of the day.” What will the catch be? How will we fish each day? When we fish will it be small or huge catch? I don’t know the answers but I encourage you to surrender to God’s doing. Let us cast our nets trusting in the work of the Spirit to reveal and multiply the “catch of the day.” Amen

**Prayers for the people:** Any request. **God of mercy: hear us.**

Everlasting God, you promised that those who wait for you will renew their strength, but in the broken world, too many still are weary. Gentle healer of every hurt we pray for those who have no shelter from the cold, no place to hide from wind and rain, no comfortable place of rest. We pray for those who are lonely and feel despair. Grant healing, compassion and health. **God of mercy hear us.**

We pray for those whose lives are shattered by war, natural disasters and for those who bear the weight of power. We pray for those who do not know your love. We pray for healing of all people and for all the hurts we name in silence. **God of mercy: hear us.**

We are thankful for the resources we have for this ministry. Help us to exercise good stewardship and to share this space with others. We pray that all those who use these facilities will encounter you through kindness and love we share with one another. Keep us safe and protect us on all our travels. **God of mercy hear us.**

We pray for our children during this winter season, keep them safe on the roads. Bless our caregivers with patience and compassion as they care for others. Grant wisdom to our politicians, medical practitioners and all those who give leadership to your church. We pray for the Spirit to give counsel and guidance with discerning the way forward for peace in our world. **God of mercy hear us.**

We sing together the Lord’ Prayer. VU # 960.

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