

# When the Word Gets Through

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[ 0 : 00 ] Oh, good morning. It's getting slightly better, that response. There was a businessman, and this businessman was from Newcastle, and he found himself down in London on business.

After rising up early in the morning in his hotel room, he phoned home before commencing what was going to be a very busy day's work. Having wished his girls a really good day at school, and assuring his wife that he would be home to help look after them the day after tomorrow, he was suddenly struck, having put the phone down, just how thankful he was to God for just how good and how blessed his life was.

While he was contemplating this, his eyes turned to a man outside who was begging. And his heart went out to him because he thought, God has been outrageously kind to me.

Can I help this man? And so he decided to try and help. And the way he tried to help is he went in the desk drawer of the hotel, got out some of the complimentary stationery, slipped a £10 note into the envelope, wrote on the front with the biro that just about worked, don't despair, and slipped it out the window to the man.

He then went off to a day's work, kept taking his umbrella and his coat. He had a busy day in the office and thought absolutely nothing about it. Just after he got home, later than he wanted, he found himself relaxing on his bed.

[ 1 : 40 ] And all of a sudden, there was a knock at the door. He reticently opened it and found the man he had given the £10 to in the morning, holding out a bundle of money.

The man said to him, Sir, thank you so much. Don't despair when the 305 at Chepstow at 60 to 1, here's your cut of £300.

The man went back to his room and thought, what an unexpected multiplication. The next episode, as we journey with Jesus around Galilee, involves an unexpected multiplication, even more than the businessman in London.

So could I invite you to take your Bible, turn to Luke chapter 5, and we'll read the first 11 verses.

One day, as Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God.

He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore.

[ 3 : 05 ] Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 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 all night and haven't caught anything.

But because you say so, I will let down the nets. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled to their partners in the other boats to come and help them.

And they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man.

For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. 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 fish for people. So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything, and followed him.

[ 4 : 10 ] Quick word of prayer, and then we'll get into this. Father God, bless us in this time. Speak to us clearly from your word. Open our hearts to receive it.

Father, bend our wills to obey it. And in this time, glorify your son, we pray. Amen. This story takes place at the Lake of Gennesaret, which is a small part of the larger Sea of Galilee.

It takes place maybe days, possibly weeks, even perhaps months, since the end of chapter four. At the end of chapter four, Jesus says to Simon, who comes looking for him, I need to go to other villages to preach the good news there also, for that is why I've come.

Jesus says, my mission statement is to get the word out. It's not so much miracles. It's not so much healing those that are demon-possessed. The primary reason that I'm here is to preach the good news of the kingdom of God.

And it seems that at the end of chapter four, he goes all around Galilee and all around Judea, preaching in synagogues as an itinerant preacher. And during this time, his reputation really grows. [ 5 : 21 ] His stock rises. Who is this young, uneducated carpenter from Nazareth who preaches with such authority, who tells us things that we've never seen before, who helps us understand what God is saying to each of us?

And so now in Capernaum, just on the edge of the Sea of Gennesaret, we see that now Jesus is back in Capernaum.

There is a massive crowd. He is preaching outside. Everyone is pressing in. They don't want to miss a single word spoken by this dynamic young teacher, the likes of which they've never heard before.

And so as Jesus preaches the word of God, I want us to see that the big thing of the day is what happens when the word gets through.

What happens when the word gets through? And we'll see some astonishing things happen. First one I want us to see is this. When the word of God invades your space, there is a real crowd problem on the Sea of Capernaum.

[ 6 : 31 ] People are everywhere. Just as Jesus was attempted to be thrown off a cliff in Nazareth, he might just get drowned if things go the way they're going in Capernaum.

And see what he's doing at the end of verse one. He is speaking the word of God and everyone is pressing in. Everyone it seems except this band of fishermen.

They're kind of off to the side. They've been working all night. They're really tired. It's not only been a long night's fishing, it has been a fruitless night's fishing. Not a single poisson has found its way into their nets.

And so they're sitting there despondent. They think, if we can just get these nets repaired, the boat's washed, we can just go home for a sleep, ready to do it all again tomorrow. What is this crowd?

We don't care. Let's get this done. Then we can go home. But Jesus hijacks one of their boats. Verse two.

[ 7 : 40 ] Now if you're a fisherman, your boat is your primary means of income. So when somebody jumps in your boat and threatens to take it, Simon leaves his nets and goes to get in his boat as well.

He doesn't want Jesus joyriding around the lake of Gennesaret in his fishing boats. And so he jumps in and Jesus, as calm as you like, says to Simon, who's a little bit afraid, please could you put out a little bit because I'd like to use your boat as a pulpit.

And Simon obeys. He thinks it's the quickest way that he can get back to bed before another night's fishing. And it seems like a really arbitrary point, but I think it's very worth making because up until this point, God's word has gone out to groups of people.

It has gone out to groups of people in a synagogue, large crowds in Nazareth. It has gone out to large groups of people outside Simon's house when he heals his mother-in-law.

And this is the thing about God's word is it's for everyone but it's two individuals. And so one of the things that Luke is using this story for is to change the camera angle.

[ 8 : 54 ] This isn't just a universal word to an anonymous faceless crowd. This is a dynamic word that impinges and invades the lives of individuals.

God's word is for me and it's for you as well as being for us. That we firmly believe here that when God's word is taught he speaks to us.

This book is not like any other book. This is not like Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. This is not Macbeth. This book is God personally addressing us.

It is God's word, God's self-revelation of himself to us. And here we see Simon. He's not really bothered about Jesus but Jesus is really bothered about him.

That he will hijack his boat in order that Jesus might invade his space and that God's word might invade his life. And so we all sit here today and I dare say even now just four minutes into my talk our mind has started drifting.

[10:05] What's for lunch? How will Southampton get on this afternoon? And if we do that we're going to miss what God has to say to each one of us.

That God has you here this morning to invade your space with his word. He's come because he wants to speak to you through this word. And this word does God's work in our lives. And therefore I'd encourage you to keep on listening and just trust that what you set the oven at will be what the oven gets at and that it'll take half an hour longer to cook than you expect that it will. Simon's life is about to fundamentally change because the word of God will invade his life. And though he wasn't that bothered about Jesus Jesus is really bothered about him. So let's make sure in the short time I'll speak we don't miss anything that God might say to us. But just think what happens if Jesus doesn't invade Simon's life.

[11:10] This is a pretty boring story. Fruitless fisherman comes after a day's hard toil with nothing mends his nets washes his boat goes to bed sleeps get ups does it all again.

Probably wouldn't make it into Luke's gospel. The story is much of our life is like that. Eat sleep work repeat. It's just very mundane.

mundane. And yet God's word will change everything about us. It will give us hope and purpose. It will give us life. It will bring us into a relationship with God for all eternity.

Simon's life would have been completely boring and mundane. Just a fisherman by the shore for his three score years and ten until he started looking at the ground from the brown side. And yet Jesus' word invading his life utterly transforms who he is.

Secondly, see this, what happens when the word insults your wisdom? What happens when the word insults your wisdom? Jesus finishes his sermon.

[12:20] Everyone starts to dissipate. And he says to Simon, Simon, I think we should go fishing. Simon has had enough of fishing.

Simon has actually just been fishing all night and caught nothing. And the night is the best time to catch the fish. And now here is Jesus, this previously retired carpenter turned itinerant preacher, starting to give Simon a lesson on fishing.

That's pretty insulting. Simon's been a fisherman all his life. His father was probably a fisherman. His grandfather was probably a fisherman. He's quite a successful fisherman as we'll see later. He's in some kind of fishing cooperative.

And here is a guy who not only had the audacity to hijack his boat, he now has the audacity to say, Simon, I think they're biting.

I think the fish are right. How insulting is that? Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.

[13:29] Simon, whose muscles still hurt from toiling all night in vain, is loath to go on a spontaneous fishing trip in the middle of the day.

However, he's so exhausted he doesn't argue and he says, Master, we've worked all night, we haven't caught anything, but because you say so, because of your words, we'll obey.

And you can just imagine it as he rose out just tired. Ah! And then he gets the net out, which he's just cleaned, which he's going to have to clean again after this fishing trip, and he starts to unfurl it into the water.

He's like, this is pointless. And then verse 6, he starts to look bewildered. Oh! There's something pulling the boat.

Oh, what are those shimmers of silver? Why is that thing jumping out of the water? Why is this water now so alive with movement and flashes of brilliance?

[14:33] Oh, no, this net now is so full, we're starting to sink. Quickly, let's get their attention over there, because we need their help, or else we're all going under.

The God who spoke on the fifth day of creation, let the waters teem with living creatures, is more than able to get the living creatures that are teeming in the lake to find their way into Simon's net. And so we see that Jesus did actually know more about fishing than Simon did. And I think this is a wonderful truth for us today, that Jesus actually knows more about absolutely everything than any of us do about anything.

Jesus is the source of all wisdom. He is the wise one. He knows more about work than we do. He knows more about preaching than I do.

You won't find that hard to believe. Jesus knows more about being a mum than you do. He knows more about running a team or leading a corporation.

[ 15 : 41 ] He knows more about being a civil servant. He knows more about studying and building and medicine and engineering than you do. And here's the really beautiful thing.

That because he knows absolutely everything about absolutely everything, and that he's willing and able to give us his wisdom when we've run out, it means that we can invite him into our university classroom.

We can invite him into our work on Monday morning and say, Jesus, this is tough today. Would you give me some wisdom? Would you help me? Will we humble ourselves before God and say, I'm kind of just a dusty human and you created absolutely everything.

Will you help me? And the wonderful thing we learn from Simon is that when we obey, when we invite Jesus into our situation and pay attention to him in our situation, there's great blessing, when his wisdom becomes our wisdom and we do the things that he's given us to do in the way that he wants, with his help and his wisdom.

Point three, we're over halfway through so just keep listening. When the word incites your response, Peter kind of joins the dots of what's happened.

[ 17 : 11 ] This is not normal. And he sees more than just Jesus as some first century sonar fish finder. This is more than Rex Hunt's fishing adventures going on on Gennesaret on this day.

He realizes that Jesus is not a normal person. He kind of sees that he's in the presence of God. Now this is only the first foray into this, it won't be until chapter nine that he really gets who Jesus is when he says you are the Messiah, the son of the living God.

But here he is conscious of Jesus' greatness. And that he is in the presence of God.

Verse eight, when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, go away from me, master, Lord, I am a sinful man.

Now what Jesus does in this book reveals something of who God is to Simon. And as Simon starts to see who God is, he starts to see who he is.

[ 18 : 20 ] He starts to see that there is a massive gulf between the God of the universe who is absolutely perfect and holy and who he is, a mere mortal who has made a lot of mistakes.

And so what's his response? Well, he does what people throughout the whole Old Testament do when they realise that they're in God's presence. He throws himself face down on the floor.

He says, go away from me. You're too perfect, you're too holy, you're too good. I am a sinful man. Peter is undone by God's greatness.

greatness. He doesn't quite understand who Jesus is, but he knows that he works with the power of God, that just as he had authority to teach, he now has authority over the fish in Gennesaret.

This is God who has authority over all of nature. And so as a response to Jesus' word, he says, go away from me. I am a sinful man. But the beautiful thing about the story is that Jesus just doesn't leave Simon face down in a load of fish.

[ 19 : 35 ] Because Jesus' words to Peter are, don't be afraid. And this is the thing that Jesus hasn't come to emphasize the gap between a holy God and sinful man.

Jesus has come to bridge that gap. He's come to do away with the chasm, the chasm caused by our sinfulness. He's come to bring reconciliation. He's come to bring a holy God and sinful people back together.

And so though Peter says, go away, Jesus says, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid because I'm here. I'm here to reveal God's word to you, but I'm here to do away with your sin that brings about that separation in the first place.

Jesus comes to deal with our sin. There's this wonderful story about a guy called Dr. Emil Victor Ryu. and Dr.

Ryu was a classicist and he worked a lot translating poetry. And in the late 19th century when he was working for Penguin Books, Penguin said to him, would you do a fresh modern translation of the gospel?

[ 20 : 43 ] And Dr. Ryu, being an ardent agnostic, thought about it for a while and said, oh I will. This is an interesting proposition.

And so he sat down with his Greek New Testament and he started studying and thinking and translating and organizing and his son was a lay reader in the Anglican church. And this is what he said about his father's project. It will be very interesting to see what father makes of the gospels. It will be still more interesting to see what the gospels make of father. And as he translates the New Testament, just like Peter, he gets a vision of who God is and he understands who he is and he's miraculously converted and he turns to Jesus as the one who can bridge that gap.

But God's word incited his response. See who you are God, you are holy and perfect and I'm not. And yet I learn about this Jesus that I don't need to be pushed away.

[ 21 : 56 ] I can see Jesus who says don't be afraid. I've come to make a real difference. Finally, and then we're done, when the word infects your purpose.

The most miraculous event in this story, I think, is not what is caught in the nets, but what is left on the beach.

Don't be afraid, says Jesus, from now on you will fish for people. So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed him. This is the windfall bumper day of all bumper days. This is the day where they get enough cash injection to buy more boats, maybe franchise out of fish and chips, have a storage facility, an international export industry.

This is an amazing windfall day. They've never dreamed of having this many fish in their vessels. And yet they leave it all, flapping about in the bottom of the boat because they have found something infinitely more compelling than fish, than money, than reputation, than wealth, than comfort and ease, than bigger houses and faster horses.

[ 23 : 21 ] Don't be afraid, from now on you will fish for people. This word that invaded their lives, they're now invited to help proclaim to the world, which is much more compelling than catching fish.

They were going to change from being killers of fish to people who would proclaim life to men. This little word for partners is the word for fellowship.

And so it's changed from being a fishing cooperative to being a fellowship founded on the Lord Jesus to make much of him and to proclaim his greatness to the world.

And that's the great thing about our church, that it's not a hobby, it's not like the bowling club. This is a fellowship.

People that are brought together, founded on the Lord Jesus to make much of him and to proclaim his glory to the world. That God's word utterly infected Simon's purpose, James and John's purpose, that they left the fish and they said, we want to do this.

[ 24 : 36 ] We want to do this. Instead, we want to fish for people. And so they spend probably two years from this point learning how to fish for people.

Learning from Jesus what it means to proclaim the good news and the content of the good news, which is Jesus. And then Jesus dies on the cross, is raised to life, reveals himself to them, teaches them for 40 days and then returns back to heaven.

And he says, now it's over to you. You're now doing the fishing. You're now doing the fishing for people. And so in Acts 2, Jesus goes out on his first solo fishing adventure.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit. And what happens? Well, there's a horde of unsuspecting Jews who hear the message and the word invades their space.

And then this same word insults their wisdom and they say, well, these are all drunken people. And Simon says, no, they're preaching the oracles of God. And then the word incites their response because 3,000 at the end, having been convicted of who God is and who they are and their need of Jesus to bridge the gap, 3,000 of them are added to the church as they say, how should we respond?

[ 25 : 55 ] And Peter says, repent and be baptized, every one of you for the forgiveness of sins. And then the word infects their purpose because the very next thing we read is that all those new people are utterly transformed and they devoted themselves to God's word and to fellowship and to partnership.

This same Jesus is still recruiting people for man fishing. That's why we're here to make much of him and to proclaim his greatness to the world. He's still calling people to see who God is, to see who they are and see their absolute need of Jesus to bring reconciliation and bridge the gap.

That is why Jesus is good news. That we don't need to be undone by our sin, but we can cling to Jesus for our hope. So I wonder, having heard God's word this morning, has it got through?

Maybe you came and you didn't care. You didn't care what this guy was going to talk about and maybe God's word has invaded your space and your interest and we'll find out more. Have a chat with me at the end and we'd love to find a way to help you explore God's word more than it might more and more invade your life.

Perhaps you came here and you were worried about loads of stuff going on at work or at home or in life. Well let me tell you that Jesus is wise in your situation and he's ready and willing to help.

[ 27 : 30 ] We'd love to pray with you and to pray for you and ask that Jesus' wisdom would be your wisdom in that situation that you're worried about. Perhaps you're conscious as God speaks through his word that you need to respond.

Perhaps it's time to leave everything else and to follow Jesus and to spend your life fishing for men. Or to leave all the things that you're finding comfort in and to trust Jesus with all of your life.

Perhaps however you're convicted at the end of today that you need to fish for people. That that's kind of got lost as you pursued other things. That you're conscious there's people in your life who need to know about the greatness of God's, their position before him and their absolute need of Jesus for hope and help and life forever.

So I wonder how we'll respond if God's word has gotten through this morning. So I'll leave maybe a minute of quiet and then I'll pray and then I'll hand back to Paul.

Father God we thank you for the power of your word. Father thank you that it is through your word that you do your work.

[ 28 : 48 ] That it tells us who you are. It tells us who we are. And it shows us our need and the glory of your son Jesus. So Lord I pray we will be clinging to him.

That we will be trusting him. That we would see that he is so much more compelling and beautiful than anything else we've got in all of our lives.

That he is worth telling people about. And so Lord I pray that your word would have done your work this morning in our lives. That it would have invaded our space.

That it would have insulted our wisdom and let it be replaced by the wisdom of Jesus. Father I pray that it would have incited a response. And I pray that it would have infected our purpose and utterly transformed the people we are and the reason we live.

We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.