



## Sermon Preparatory Notes

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### Sermon Notes:

#### Epiphany 5 Preparatory Notes:

#### Luke 5:1-11 Commentary 1 by Ronald Allen

Most scholars think that Luke did not simply record a biography of Jesus when Luke wrote about 80-90 AD, but shaped the story of the Gospel and the Acts to address circumstances in the church of Luke's time.

Consequently, we should attend to the call of the first apostles in Luke 5:1-11 from the viewpoint of how Luke intended this passage to function in the larger narrative and purpose of the Gospel and the Acts. The mission is what the community should do to move forward.

Two important issues in the community to which Luke wrote are in the background of Luke 5:1-11: authority and mission. Authority: who should the community believe? Mission: what should the community do in its context? These questions were important, as Luke's congregation was in a network of competing claims and tensions regarding traditional Judaism, the Roman Empire, and within the congregation itself.

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Luke has introduced Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet whose mission is to announce the coming of the Realm of God and to invite people to repent and join the movement towards the Realm (Luke 4:14-30).

Leaders in antiquity often gathered followers who could further the leader's mission by learning the content of the leader's teaching, the way of life appropriate to it, and how to adapt the leader's teaching to fresh circumstances. Jesus chose twelve such figures whom Luke designates "apostles." (For Luke the term "disciples" refers to the much larger group of Jesus' followers among whom the twelve play a special role.)

The first four apostles were in the fishing business. With their own boats, they were similar to middle class business owners today. They had no particular religious credentials to commend them to Jesus. Instead, they were typical representatives of the broken old age -- living under Roman oppression, including taxes, and beset by other forms of social conflict and economic distress. Many Christians in the historic denominations today can identify with the situation of the apostles.

Today's listener wants to know, "Why did Jesus choose these twelve?" For Luke, Jesus evidently chose them under prophetic inspiration. Since Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, he could still work through the apostles through the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1: 1-11; 7:56).

The earliest church expected the second coming to occur soon, but it was delayed. Luke uses the figures of the apostles to represent the continuation of Jesus' authority in the church in the delay. Jesus directly calls the first four apostles in Luke 5:1-11. This call authenticates the twelve as authorities for the church in Acts and, consequently, for the church in Luke's later day.

Luke portrays the apostles in Acts as guiding and authorizing the church's responses to Judaism, Rome, and its own internal conflicts. For example,

Luke uses the figures of the apostles to offer the paradigm for witness and common life (Acts 2:1-47); they set the pattern for responding to Jewish criticism (Acts 4:1-22); they organize the congregation (Acts 6:1-7); they legitimate the gentile mission (Acts 10:1-11;18), and they certify Paul as great missionary to the gentiles (Acts 15:1-29).

Jesus directed Simon to put down their nets in the deep water. Simon's response begins with an old age point of view: they had fished all night and caught nothing, so why should they expect anything different? Yet they do what Jesus says to do. In the midst of an unpromising situation, the future apostles let down their nets. When they do so, they catch a super-abundance of fish. Their nets -- made of old-age materials -- cannot handle the catch and begin to break.

This event helps both establish apostolic authority and model what the apostles -- and the church -- are to do. The soon-to-be-apostles indicate their willingness to follow Jesus by doing what he said to do. Jesus verified their identity -- and demonstrates the nature of the Realm -- by giving them the abundant catch. Moreover, the four people model what the disciples and the church are to do: they are to do what Jesus says, even in the face of unpromising circumstances.

Why should Luke's church pay attention to the apostolic tradition as interpreted by Luke? Because that tradition was confirmed in the experience of the apostles from their first encounter with Jesus.

There is a subtle aspect to this narrative connected to the "deep water" (*bathos*). This theme occurs several times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Torah, Prophets and Writings) in connection with the primordial sea, a powerful Jewish symbol of chaos (see also Psalm 68:2; Ezekiel 26:20; 32:18-24; Sirach 24:5; 51:5). Luke perceives his world as a chaos: hostility between traditional Judaism and the followers of Jesus, the repressive behavior of the Empire, and conflict within the church.

Luke spells out the mission of the apostles in a well-known image: "from now on you will be catching people." This image of fishing recalls earlier instructions from God to prophets to bring people together (to catch them) for judgement (see Jeremiah 16:16; Amos 4:2; see Habakkuk 1:14-15).

The paradigmatic instance of such fishing is Acts 2:38 where Peter invites the Jewish crowd to repent, to be immersed into the eschatological community, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke affirms this style of fishing for gentiles in Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:1-29. The ministry of the

apostles becomes the model for the disciples and the church: as the apostles pulled their nets from the sea teeming with fish in Luke 5:1-11, so the church in Acts fills its nets (so to speak) with both Jews and gentiles in eschatological community.

To be sure the image of “catching people” is troubling today because of its violence and its one way of mode of relationship. Nevertheless, its function is one that the preacher might take as a purpose for the sermon: to encourage the church to drop its nets into the chaos of life today, that is, to witness to the Realm of God and to invite people into the movement towards the Realm. The threat of chaos is self-evident in early 2019 in national politics, relationships among races and ethnic communities, international relationships, and many other places. According to Luke, the church continues the apostolic tradition when it offers individuals, households, and communities the values and practices of the Realm of God as an alternative way of life.

### ***Luke 5:1-11 Commentary 2 by Arland Hultgren***

Prior to the reading of the Gospel for the Day -- the call of the first disciples in Luke 5:1-11 -- the congregation will have heard two other texts which relate quite directly to it.

The First Lesson is the majestic text from Isaiah 6:1-8, the call of the prophet Isaiah. The Second Lesson is from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he alludes to his own call as an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:8). He speaks more fully of that in Galatians 1:15-16.

The call of the first disciples appears, naturally, early on in the ministry of Jesus. Up to this point, the main events have been Jesus' baptism (3:21-22), his temptation in the wilderness (4:1-13), his inaugural sermon and rejection at Nazareth (4:16-30), and a series of healings (4:31-41). More immediately, there is a series of events that includes his going to a deserted place to be alone, his being sought out by crowds of people, and his teaching in synagogues (4:42-44).

The story opens with Jesus beside Lake Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. He borrows a boat on the lakeshore that belongs to a fisherman named Simon. From there he teaches crowds of people. They will not leave him alone, for they want to hear "the word of

God." As the story unfolds, Jesus asks Simon to go out to the deep water and to put down the nets for a catch. Simon does so; there is a great catch of fish; the catch is so great that others have to help bring the nets ashore; and the story ends with Jesus' recruiting Simon and the others as disciples.

The names of those on the scene are provided. Simon is mentioned by name five times over (5:3, 4, 5, 8, 10), and on one of those occasions he is called Simon Peter (5:8). The use of the name Peter is a bit early here, for according to Luke himself, Jesus gave him that name at a later time (6:14).

Nevertheless, it makes sense that it appears here, so that the reader of the gospel knows who Simon is. Missing from the account of those present is Andrew, the brother of Peter, who is called at the same time in the other two Synoptic Gospels (Mark 1:16//Matthew 4:18). In the Gospel of John he is actually called earlier than Peter (1:40-42). Other persons on the scene are James and John, sons of Zebedee, who are "partners with Simon."

Clearly the main figure on the scene, apart from Jesus himself, is Simon Peter. It is his boat that Jesus uses. It is he to whom Jesus speaks first, asking him to go into the deep water. Conversely, Simon Peter is the only person who speaks to Jesus. He addresses him as "master" (Greek: *epistatēs*, a term used for tutors and teachers) at 5:5. But after the miraculous catch, he addresses him as "Lord" (*kyrios*) at 5:8. Likewise, Simon Peter is the only one whom Jesus addresses directly, both when he tells him to go into the deep water (5:4). And, interestingly, even at the end of the story when he says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people" (5:10), for in Greek the verbs are second person singular. Incidentally, the "fish for people" (or "fishers of men" in the KJV, RSV, and NIV) metaphor does not appear in Luke, but only in the parallel accounts (Matthew 4:19//Mark 1:17). Luke's verb is *zōgreō* (simply "to catch"), while in the other accounts a noun is used, *alieis* ("fishermen," plural), addressed to both Peter and Andrew. The status of Peter is obviously important in Luke's account, and that is not surprising. Not only was Peter prominent in the traditions that Luke received concerning the earthly Jesus and his companions, but Luke knew that Peter was an important leader in the early church, as he narrates in Acts 1-11.

There are features to this story that resonate with other significant biblical motifs. One is that, when Simon is called, he resists, as do Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, to name but three (Exodus 3:11; Isaiah 6:1-11; Jeremiah 1:6). Simon objects to Jesus' command to go out to the deep water, but then he does as he was told to do (5:5).

Another is the exclamation of Simon, saying that the "Lord" should depart from him because of his being a sinful man (5:8). It is a common biblical motif for a person to feel unworthy in the presence of the divine (Exodus 3:6; 33:20; Judges 6:22; 13:22; Isaiah 6:5; Luke 18:13). Finally, the miracle of the great catch is, like others in the gospels, more than one should expect. The exceeding of expectations appear in other miracle stories too, as in the Healing of the Paralytic (Luke 5:17-26), the Feeding of the Multitudes (Luke 9:12-17), and the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11).

The story of the call of Jesus' first disciples is fitting for the Epiphany Season, a time in which the church celebrates the gift of Jesus Christ as a "manifestation" (*epiphania*) of God, and gives thoughtful consideration to his mission to the world.

Jesus has come into the world to reveal God and to redeem the cosmos. But he is known to us only through the witness of his apostles. The call of the first disciples marks the beginning of a movement that culminates in the founding of the church. The church did not come into existence through a group of persons who wanted to start a good, even benevolent, organization. From the gospels, we learn that it had its beginning with Jesus, who called certain persons to follow him. He created a community of disciples who heard him preach and teach, heal, and finally suffer, die, and rise from death on the first Easter.

The story of the church is reflected to some degree in this story itself. When Jesus calls, Peter is hesitant and thinks that what Jesus asks of him is both unnecessary and too demanding. Nevertheless, Peter responds, and he discovers that life has a surprise in store for him. By doing what Jesus asks him to do, he experiences an epiphany of God.

God often becomes manifest in the ordinary, even seemingly unnecessary events of a person's life -- events which nevertheless are in accord with some purpose that is or is not known. Throughout history the

church has continued to exist and carry on its ministry in spite of the tenuous responses of its members. The ancient image of the church as a fisherman's boat tossed about on the sea, but sustained by the presence of the living Lord, is appropriate in every age.

The commissioning of Peter is of particular importance. He became a leader among the Twelve during the earthly ministry of Jesus (as at Luke 9:20, 33; 12:41; 18:28) and also as a powerful preacher and leader in the early church. Although he alone is addressed in this particular story, both he and the other disciples are commissioned by the risen Lord to carry on the mission of Jesus (see Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:6-11). Finally, the witness of the disciples to Jesus, his words, and his deeds is to extend "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), and that commission is being realized in the present

### ***Luke 5:1-11 ESV Commentary***

**Luke 5:1 lake of Gennesaret.** The Sea of Galilee.

**Luke 5:1–11 Jesus Calls the First Disciples.** Jesus calls common fishermen to leave everything and become his disciples as fishers of men (cf. [v. 10](#)). Jesus precedes the call by demonstrating his authority through the miraculous catch of fish.

**Luke 5:3 Getting into one of the boats ... he ... taught.** Cf. [Mark 4:1–2](#).

**Luke 5:4–5 let down your nets. ... Master, we toiled all night and took nothing.** Simon's reply to Jesus' command should not be seen as one of disrespect, in light of his addressing him as "Master" (cf. [8:24](#), [45](#); [9:33](#), [49](#); [17:13](#)), and then immediately adding, **But at your word I will let down the nets.**

**Luke 5:6–7 A large number of fish** is dramatized by **their nets ... breaking** and their signaling **to their partners ... to come and help them.** That both ships **began to sink** further emphasizes the great catch of fish. Jesus' miracle demonstrates that he is Lord of the sea and all that is in it.

**Luke 5:8–9 Simon's reaction** is appropriate for times when God himself appears to someone (cf. [Isa. 6:1–8](#); [Ezek. 1:28](#)): **he fell down at Jesus' knees** (in the midst of the fish!), asking the **Lord to depart from him**, lest he be judged as a **sinful man**. Peter was **astonished** by the miracle as a

demonstration of the presence of God, which was the first step in understanding who Jesus is. At this point Peter simply understands that God works through Jesus, though he will come to a much deeper understanding, as this unfolds only over a period of time (see [Mark 8:29](#)). But it is only after the resurrection that Peter and the disciples fully understand who Jesus is (cf. [Luke 24:31](#), [36–43](#), [52](#)).

**Luke 5:10 Do not be afraid.** See [1:13](#). **Catching men** builds on the analogy of catching fish. It means bringing people into the kingdom of God, and into relationship with Jesus.

### **1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Commentary by Carla Works**

At the heart of the gospel lies a scandalous claim: The ancient God of Israel raised Jesus -- a first century Jew -- from the dead. This message must have been a tough sell among the nations who had their own ancient gods with spectacular temples and golden statues. Corinth was no exception. Temples to other gods surrounded the center of the town and towered over the marketplace. Religion was at the heart of everyday life. And yet a church formed around the scandalous claim of the bodily resurrection of a Jewish peasant from a backwater region of the Empire.

Perhaps the Corinthians had an easier time believing the claim when Paul was with them. After all, Paul was convinced that he had seen the risen Christ. Indeed, it is hard to account for his radical life change otherwise.

In our text this week, we find some in First Church Corinth in doubt. Why would this God raise the dead? Couldn't we just follow Jesus's teaching without talking about resurrection? For Paul, there is no good news unless God has raised Jesus from the dead. If God has not raised Jesus, if God has not claimed victory over death, then the gospel is a sham.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul addresses the Corinthians' concerns over resurrection. He spends more time on this topic than any other topic in the letter. Given the importance of this belief to the heart of the gospel it is not hard to see why it is critical for the apostle to remind the church of the gospel that they had believed.



The text begins with a reminder of the message that Paul has passed on to them -- a message that he did not invent but received from God. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul rehashes the gospel in a nutshell. Christ has died for our sins. He was buried and raised on third day. There are some noteworthy emphases in Paul's retelling. He notes that the life and death of Christ were related to scripture; in fact, he makes this claim twice. Second, he emphasizes post resurrection appearances -- a point that is less surprising since he is going to reiterate that the resurrection did occur.

Why might he emphasize scripture? First Church Corinth, though it does appear to have a few Jewish believers, like Crispus, for instance, is a church mainly composed of Gentiles. There is no guarantee that the non-Jews know scripture well or even consider it authoritative. Paul would have instructed them in scripture while he was with them. The references here though remind the Corinthians that this God is not an upstart God. The God who raised Jesus has been active a long time. This is the work of an ancient God. And this God is faithful and trustworthy (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13).

The resurrection appearances also lend credibility to the story. Cephas and the twelve would be considered authoritative. It seems that the church has at least heard of Cephas, given Paul's recounting of possible divisions in the beginning of the letter (1:12). If twelve apostles are not enough, Paul cites a resurrection appearance to more than five hundred people -- some of whom were still alive at the time of his writing. Then he cites James and all the apostles. Clearly, he is using the designation of "apostle" as inclusive of more than the twelve, since he himself is among them.

Paul does not deserve to be among them -- at least he does not think so. The language that he uses to describe himself gets lost in translation. Our English translations often say something to the effect of an untimely birth: "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (verse 8). This makes it sound like he was just born at the wrong time -- as though he was born too late to be among the twelve. But this is a misinterpretation.

The word that Paul uses to describe himself is a premature birth -- a birth that usually results in death. It is the epitome of weakness. In a world where only fifty percent of full-term births reached the age of ten, the premature baby had little to no chance of survival. This is the same term

used to describe a stillbirth. *Christ's narrative is not the only resurrection story in this passage.*

Paul so firmly believes the resurrection because he was as good as dead when Christ appeared to him. He was killing the church of God. He was doing everything in his power to end the Jesus movement. He was a murderer and a persecutor and completely unworthy of God's grace. And God chose him anyway.

Whenever Paul recounts his pre-conversion life, he notes his time as a persecutor of the church (see Philippians 3:4-6; Galatians 1:13, 23; see also 1 Timothy 1:13). He remains overwhelmed by God's grace that God could forgive him for such atrocities. And he returns that gratitude in service to God. He notes how hard he labors for this gospel. He was the least likely candidate for God to choose. If God can do something good through Paul the murderer, surely that God has the power to work wonders in the lives of others. The fact that the Corinthians have believed the scandal of the resurrection demonstrates that they too have been touched by God's grace.

In this season of Epiphany, we are reminded that seeing the resurrected Christ changed the trajectory of Paul's life. Without the revelation of Christ, there is no good news. When God reveals God's self, our little worlds are transformed. We cannot go on with life as normal, because we cannot un-see God in our midst. Like Paul, we are unworthy of this life-changing revelation. May we work tirelessly -- as Paul did (1 Corinthians 15:10) -- to extend God's grace to others.

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 ESV Commentary

**1 Cor. 15:1-4 you received ... I delivered.** Paul is using commonly recognized language for handing on, intact, a body of information that one has received from others (see [11:2, 23](#); [Mark 7:13](#); [Luke 1:2](#); [Acts 6:14](#); [Phil. 4:9](#); [Jude 3](#)). **in accordance with the Scriptures.** See also [Luke 24:27](#); [John 2:19, 22](#); [Acts 17:2-3](#); [Rom. 1:2-4](#). Paul may be thinking especially of [Isa. 53:3-12](#), which describes the substitutionary death and the vindication, after death, of God's servant, but he may also be thinking of other OT passages. For the resurrection, see also [Hos. 6:2](#) and [Jonah 1:17; 2:1](#) ([Matt. 12:40](#)), and for the OT in general pointing to **Christ**, see [Luke 24:25-27](#) and the article, Overview of the Bible.

**1 Cor. 15:1–58** The Futility of Faith If the Dead Are Not Raised. Many people in the ancient Greco-Roman world believed that death extinguished life completely or led to a permanent but shadowy and insubstantial existence in the underworld. The concept of a physical, embodied existence after death was known mainly from popular fables and was thought laughable by the educated. Paul deals with the Corinthians' denial of ([v. 12](#)) and confusion about ([v. 35](#)) the future, bodily resurrection of Christians. These issues were probably raised in their letter to him ([7:1](#)).

**1 Cor. 15:1–11** The Truthfulness of the Traditions about Christ's Resurrection. Paul first establishes the historical reliability of Jesus' resurrection in order to lay a firm foundation for his argument that it was only the first step in the resurrection of all deceased Christians.

**1 Cor. 15:5** **Cephas** is the Aramaic name for the apostle Peter ([Gal. 2:8–9](#)). He and John were the first of the men who followed Jesus to know that his tomb was empty ([Luke 24:12](#); [John 20:5–6](#); cf. [Mark 16:7](#)). **The twelve** includes Judas's replacement, Matthias (see [Acts 1:21–23](#), [26](#)).

**1 Cor. 15:6** These witnesses were **still alive** and therefore able to give firsthand testimony to the truth of this tradition. **though some have fallen asleep**. Paul is careful not to exaggerate (cf. [7:10](#), [12](#), where he carefully distinguishes between his own words and Jesus' words), evidence of the great care that early Christians took in their preservation of the historically accurate details about Jesus.

**1 Cor. 15:7** **James** was the brother of the Lord ([Gal. 1:19](#)) and leader of the Jerusalem church ([Acts 12:17](#); [15:13](#); [21:18](#); [Gal. 2:9](#), [12](#)). See note on 1 Cor. 9:4–5. **all the apostles**. The group of apostles is larger than “the Twelve,” including, among others, James and Paul ([1 Cor. 15:8](#)). One of the qualifications for apostleship was seeing the risen Lord ([9:1](#)).

**1 Cor. 15:8** **Last of all**. Sandwiched between [vv. 7 and 9](#), this suggests that Paul thought there would be no more apostles chosen after him. **appeared also to me**. Making Paul an apostle (see note on 1:1).

**1 Cor. 15:9** On Paul as persecutor of the church, see [Acts 7:58](#); [8:1–3](#); [9:1–2](#); [Gal. 1:13](#); [Phil. 3:6](#); [1 Tim. 1:13](#).

**1 Cor. 15:10 grace of God.** Paul considered his conversion from “persecutor” to “apostle to the Gentiles” to be a free and wholly undeserved gift of God ([Rom. 15:15–16](#); [Gal. 1:15](#); [2:9](#); [Eph. 3:7–8](#); [Phil. 1:9](#); [1 Tim. 1:14](#)). God’s grace did not lead to passivity, however, for it prompted hard work on Paul’s part.

**1 Cor. 15:11 I or they.** Cf. [3:6](#); [Phil. 1:18](#). Paul does not care who gets the credit for the gospel’s advancement, only that it advances.

Judges 6:11-24 ESV Commentary

**Judg. 6:11 the angel of the Lord.** See note on 2:1. **beating out wheat in the winepress.** Grapes were normally trodden in a winepress, a square or circular pit carved into rock (cf. [Isa. 16:10](#); [Jer. 48:33](#)), whereas wheat was usually threshed on open threshing floors, where the wind could carry away the chaff in the winnowing process ([2 Sam. 24:18](#)). Gideon’s secret threshing inside a winepress—when he already had access to a true threshing floor (cf. [Judg. 6:37](#))—shows the desperate straits because of Midianite oppression.

**Judg. 6:11–40 Gideon’s Call.** God’s call of a reluctant Gideon is the focus of the next three accounts. First, the angel of the Lord appeared to him ([vv. 11–24](#)); then, Gideon destroyed an altar of Baal ([vv. 25–35](#)); finally, Gideon’s wavering faith is on full display ([vv. 36–40](#)). Gideon’s reluctance recalls that of Moses ([Exodus 3–4](#)).

**Judg. 6:13 sir.** The term is literally “my Lord” (Hb. *’Adoni*; see esv footnote). This was a polite form of address (cf. [4:18](#), where Jael spoke the same words to Sisera). Gideon uses the same term to refer to God in [6:15](#) (“Lord”; Hb. *’Adonay*). **the Lord** (Hb. *YHWH*). This is the personal name of God (see note on Gen. 2:4).

**Judg. 6:15–16 I am the least.** Moses and Jeremiah had similar objections when God called them ([Ex. 3:11](#); [Jer. 1:6](#)). **I will be with you.** This promise of God’s presence had also been given to Moses and Joshua ([Ex. 3:12](#); [Josh. 1:5](#), [9](#)), putting Gideon in the same lineage of leaders, with the same guarantee of success. Nonetheless, Gideon had his doubts and fears (cf. [Judg. 6:17 and esp. vv. 36–40](#)).

**Judg. 6:15** God again chooses to save Israel through a weak and timid person (cf. [4:9](#)), prefiguring the triumph of divine glory through human weakness in Christ ([1 Cor. 1:25](#); [2 Cor. 13:4](#)).

**Judg. 6:22 perceived.** Lit., “saw” (Hb. *ra’ah*, translated **seen** later in the verse). Gideon feared for his life because he had encountered God’s angel **face to face** (cf. [Gen. 32:30](#); [Ex. 33:20](#)).

**Judg. 6:24 To this day.** This expression is common in Joshua and Judges (e.g., [Josh. 4:9](#); [5:9](#); [6:25](#); [7:26](#); [Judg. 1:21](#), [26](#); [15:19](#)). The **Abiezrites** were part of the tribe of Manasseh that settled west of the Jordan River ([Num. 26:30](#); [Josh. 17:1–2](#)).