

Characteristics of Jesus' Divinity, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Code: 42-62

Let's open our Bibles to the fifth chapter of Luke, the gospel of Luke. Apologies to those of you who weren't with us last week, we began a two-part series on the first eleven verses of Luke 5 under the title, "The Divine Fishermen." The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, present the person of Jesus Christ. They present Him undisputably as God in human flesh, that's what the story of Christmas is all about, it is God coming down in human flesh, virgin born. And that is the message of the gospels, that is the central truth of Christianity. The key doctrine in our faith is that Jesus is God, the creator God, the Sustainer of the universe and the Consummator who will bring all things ultimately to their final end and to His eternal glory. Jesus the man was also Jesus God. That emphasis is made in all four gospels repeatedly. In fact, you could almost pick any chapter of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and you would find manifestation in the historical accounts of these writers of Jesus' deity. That is certainly the case in the opening eleven verses of Luke chapter 5.

It is a wonderfully simple account. It is a wonderfully uncomplicated historical record about fishing. But though it is a very simple and uncomplicated account, it is profound beyond our reason. It takes us beyond where our minds can even go because herein is God Himself revealed in Christ.

How do we know Jesus is God? And the answer is, because He manifests all the characteristics of God. We know He is God because His attributes are the attributes that belong only to God. If you are to define God biblically, the true and living God, you would define Him as the source of truth. You would define Him as omniscient, that is He knows everything there is to know and there is nothing that exists in the material or spiritual realm that He doesn't know.

Not only that, He is not only omniscient, He is omnipotent. That is He has all power and when I say all power I mean that He has infinite power, that there is no limit to His power and when His power is used there is no diminishing of it.

It is also true of God that He is holy, that He is perfectly holy, that He is without any flaw or error whatsoever. Has never thought, said or done anything that is wrong. That is God. God is truth. God is infinite knowledge. God is infinite power. God is infinite holiness. And another characteristic of God which matters a lot to us is that God is merciful and His mercy is as infinite as everything else. There is no limit to His mercy. And when His mercy is dispensed, it is not in any sense diminished.

Now the people living in Palestine at the time of Jesus knew about God. They knew that God was the God of truth because He's called that in the Old Testament. They knew that He was the God of knowledge, that all knowledge came from God, that God was the great revealer of all knowledge. They knew that there wasn't anything that God didn't know. They knew that God knew everything from the beginning to the end.

They also knew that God was powerful. They knew that His power was infinite, that He was El Shaddai, the Almighty God. And they knew that God was holy, holy, holy and repeatedly in the book of Leviticus God says, "I am holy, I am holy, I am holy," meaning separated from sin.

And they also knew that God was merciful. They knew that God had revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus chapter 33 and said, "I'm going to show you who I am," and He displayed His mercy and His compassion. They knew that the true and living God, the creator God, the God of Israel was a God of truth, a God of infinite knowledge, infinite power, infinite holiness and infinite mercy.

When Jesus came then, if Jesus was to convince them that He was God, He had to manifest all that was true of God. And these five things are at the very heart of who God is. He is absolute truth and the source of all that is true and cannot lie. And that is essential because the only way we're going to know truth is as He reveals it to us. And all that He has revealed is in fact truth and all that contradicts it is deception.

It is also critical to the nature of God that He know everything. If He doesn't know everything then He's not in control of everything. And if He is the sovereign of the universe who fulfills His purpose in everything that occurs in the universe, He has to know all of the elements that make up that universe materially and spiritually. It is also critical that He be the God of infinite power or He can't control everything. It's not a matter of knowing everything only to be sovereign, it's a matter of controlling everything. It is also critical that God be absolutely, perfectly holy and without sin or He cannot be the redeemer of sinners and it obviously is true that He must be a God of mercy in order to overlook our iniquities and give us salvation in spite of our sin.

These are not just minor elements of the nature of God, these are at the very heart of who God is. In fact, if I were to think a long time and try to come up with a list that would define God, I couldn't come up with a better list than these five: truth, knowledge, power, holiness and mercy. They mark the true and living God. This is who God is. You read the Psalms. You read the Old Testament. You read the law. You read the books of history. You read the books of poetry. You read any part in the New ...of the Old Testament and you're going to find God revealed in these terms. The Jewish people knew it.

The disciples knew it. They were part of the synagogue crowd. They had been raised in the synagogue, raised in Judaism. They had been raised to be instructed by the Old Testament. They

knew their God. They knew His attributes. They knew who He was. And when Jesus came, Jesus demonstrated all of those very same attributes.

Now last time we looked at the first two attributes that manifest themselves in this incident. It was early in the day, around the...as it's called here...the lake of Gennesaret, usually called the Sea of Galilee. It is a lake. And Jesus had, as was so often the case, managed to collect around Him a massive crowd numbering in the thousands, if not the tens of thousands. And they were pressing around Him, verse 1 says, as He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. In fact, the crowd was putting so much pressure on Him, obviously attracted not only by His teaching but by the fact that He had been healing everybody of every disease that was brought to Him, as it tells us back in verse 40, all those who were sick with various diseases were brought to Him and He was healing all of them. He also had been casting demons out of people who were beleaguered by demon possession, many demons were coming out crying and saying, "You are the Son of God," as verse 41 of chapter 4 says. So His miracle power over the kingdom of darkness, His miracle power over the kingdom of disease, we could say, had drawn a tremendous crowd. He was in the process of banishing disease from Palestine and now from Galilee at first here in the north. And there would be more to come. He was drawing great crowds and they were pressing against Him as He moved back toward the water to get away from the press, He realized that the only way He would be able to teach them was if He got in a boat. Verse 2 says He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left them, apparently one of them belonged to Peter and the other one belonged to perhaps James and John, the sons of Zebedee and the two groups were partners in fishing, so both of their boats were pulled up, at least the bow of the boat was pulled up onto the shore because the fishing had gone on during the night as it typically did and this was daytime and they were mending their nets. It tells us that in verse 2.

In verse 3 Jesus got into one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, or Peter, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. This is what was primary in Jesus' ministry, and that was teaching. It was fine to do miracles, but miracles wouldn't bring people into the Kingdom of God. It was fine to cast out demons, but being divested of demons wouldn't bring people into the Kingdom of God. The only thing that would bring people into the Kingdom of God was the knowledge of the gospel, the knowledge of the truth. And so the primary ministry of Jesus was a ministry of teaching.

And when He taught, and here's the key phrase, go back to verse 1, it says, "It came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God." This tells us, first of all, that He is the source of divine truth...divine truth. They were literally in the Greek, they were listening to the word that comes from God. He spoke the word of God. When He opened His mouth and spoke, God spoke...God spoke. And we talked about that at some length last time, how that Jesus spoke the word that comes from God because He in fact is God.

The second thing we noted last time about Jesus that matches up with the character of God is divine knowledge, omniscience. And the account in verses 4 to 6 points this out. After He finished using Peter's boat to speak and it was left there in the shallows off the shore a little bit just to get Him some space. And as we said, the water acts as a voice conductor, the voice bounces off and it makes it easier for the people sort of on the panorama of the hillside to hear what He's saying. But after He finished His message, He wanted to demonstrate who He was, it should have been enough that He spoke and it was the voice of God, but He adds to that, "He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'" He says...Let's go fishing, Simon.

Well normally, as I said last time, you don't go fishing in the daytime in that hot place where the sun burns on the top of the water. The fish go down very, very deep and below the capability of the nets and away from the shore and that's not the time you want to fish. They fish at night. Simon answered and said in verse 5, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing." And what he is saying is, "Lord, there aren't any fish out there, we've been there. There's no point in fishing in the daytime, first of all, and secondly, there's no point in fishing here because we fished all night and the fish aren't here." And he just couldn't resist suggesting that reality to the Lord. He did it in a kind way because he says immediately after that, "But at Your bidding I will let down the nets." Calls Him Master, which recognizes that the Lord is the chief and the commander and he understands that. And so he wants to be obedient but it's an awful lot of work. He even talks about the fact that they worked hard all night. It is hard work to do what they did, handling nets, as I told you last time, these nets that were used out in the deep places could stretch a quarter mile, a half mile in length. Now the top was floated by cork and the bottom had weights and it created a wall of net. One boat would take the net to its extreme point and then circle back, then come back to join the other boat and they would begin to winch in the ropes on the top and the bottom and just pull in everything that was there. That's how they fished. It was a tremendous, tremendous physical effort. And it really wasn't something you wanted to do during the day if you had done it all night, and you knew there weren't any fish.

A most amazing thing happened. Verse 6 says, "When they had done this they enclosed a great quantity of fish." When they did it, they received a catch of fish that was absolutely enormous. And the point that we made last time is Jesus knew where the fish were. This is shocking. He has supernatural knowledge. He knows what nobody knows. And they also knew that God alone was omniscient, that God alone knew this kind of information. Man couldn't know this. This is God, He knows where the fish are.

This is characteristic of Jesus on a number of occasions. In the gospel of Mark, Mark wants us to know that Jesus has the knowledge that only God has. In the fourteenth chapter of Mark and the thirteen verse...thirteenth verse, it was time for the Passover and Jesus wanted to have a place to celebrate the Passover because there were pilgrims in Jerusalem and they needed to rent a room.

And so He sent His disciples, two of them, into Jerusalem and He said this to them, verse 13, "Go into the city and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water." This is a man Jesus had never met. This is a man Jesus had never seen. But He says you're going to see a man with a pitcher of water, follow him...follow him, just follow him. Don't talk to him, just follow him and wherever he enters go in and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher says where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" He knew about this house. He knew that it had a proper room for them to have the Passover. He knew about a man who would be going to that house with a pitcher that he was carrying and He said to the disciples, "Just go into town, when you see the man with the pitcher, follow him and everything else will fall into place." This is supernatural knowledge. He knows about a man who isn't yet where he's going to be, He knows about a place He's never seen.

In the first chapter of John's gospel and verse 47, Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him. And He said to him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." He identifies something about the character of Nathanael. He's met him for the first time, seen him for the first time humanly. But He identifies him. And Nathanael said to Him in verse 48, "How do You know me? How do You know me?" And Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, before Philip even brought you, when you were out under that fig tree I saw you." Well He didn't see him with His physical eyes, He couldn't. "Nathanael answered and said, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You literally have the life of God in you.'" He was saying, "You are God the Son, only God knows that, only God can see people who are out of human vision, only God knows the character of somebody they've never met."

Over in chapter 2 of John, verse 24, Jesus on His part was not entrusting Himself to them. "Certain people because He knew all men and because He didn't need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man." Jesus never needed information about people, He knew what they were like. He knew what was in their mind, what was in their heart because He knew and knows everything.

In the sixth chapter of John and verse 64, Jesus says, "There are some of you who do not believe." Now Jesus wasn't saying that in a general sense. He was saying that, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who didn't believe." He always knew who wouldn't believe. From the beginning He knew who wouldn't believe. He knows who won't believe. He also knew who it was that would betray Him. He knew who Judas was and He knew Judas would never really believe and He knew Judas would betray Him even though the other disciples didn't know it, even the night of the betrayal, and when it was announced that one of them would betray Him, they were saying, "Is it I? Is it I? Is it I? Is it I?" Jesus always knew who would betray Him. Jesus always knew from the beginning who would not believe in Him because He knows everything there is to be known.

In the thirteenth chapter of John's gospel, again His omniscience is reported to us. He says, "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, from now on...He says...as of this point on I'm going to tell you things that haven't happened yet and I'm going to tell them to you so that when it does

occur you may believe that I am He." That is, that I am God, that I am the Son of God, the Messiah. "I'm going to start telling you things before they happen." He knows not only what is but what will be.

And then in the sixteenth chapter of the gospel of John and the thirtieth verse, it says, "His disciples said to Him, 'You are speaking plainly, You are not using a figure of speech.'" And then they said this, "Now we know that You know all things." That's right, they were finally awakening to the fact that He knew everything. "And You have no need for anyone to question You. By this we believe that You came from God. That You proceeded," as it were, "out of the trinity because You know everything." This is characteristic only of God...only of God.

There were times when Jesus imposed some limits on Himself, like the time of Mark 11, I believe it is, about verse 13, that He went to look at a fig tree to see if it had any fruit. And there is a time recorded in the eighth chapter of Luke around verse 45, 46 where there is someone who touches Him and He says, "Who touched Me?" There's a very human response. You see Him in His humanness going to see if there's fruit on a tree, turning around to see who it was who touched Him. Those are the rare occasions when you see His humanness unaided for at least a moment by His deity. And then that remarkable time in Matthew 24:36 when talking about His Second Coming He said, "No man knows the day nor the hour when the Son of Man comes, no, not even the Son of Man." At this point He had willfully restricted that knowledge, He had set it aside as He had a right to do. Well those were the rare elements and the rare occasions and the rare bits of information that Jesus restricted Himself from knowing. Everything else to know He knew because as God He knew everything, from the beginning to the end of everything He knows it all, there's nothing He doesn't know.

And all of a sudden Peter is literally shocked by the realization that Jesus knows what nobody knows, He knows where the fish are. Just like He knew where the fish was when He told Peter to go down and throw a hook in the...into the water and pull out a fish that had a coin in its mouth that could pay their taxes. Just like He knew where the fish were in John 21 when Peter tried to go back to his old fishing profession and couldn't catch fish and Jesus said, "They're on the right side of the boat, try there." Indeed they were there. Jesus knows where all His creatures are at all times. I told you last week He knows every sparrow that hops and every time the sparrow hops because there isn't anything that exists in the material or immaterial world that He doesn't know. It's not that He has to learn it, or discover it, He knows it because it exists. And He knows what yet hasn't come to pass. He's not in process as theologians are telling us now. He's not becoming something, He's not searching for information, He acquires no information. There's no information to acquire. He knows everything that is happening, has happened, or ever will happen. And this is true of Christ. And so we see Him as God by virtue of divine knowledge.

Okay, that's review, now let's come to the third point. In the third point omniscience blends into omnipotence. It's one thing to know where the fish are, it's another thing to have the power to gather

them there. And this is what stuns us in this story because we read in verse 6, "When they had done what the Lord told them to do, put down the nets, the amazing result, they enclosed a great quantity of fish." A massive quantity, an enormous quantity of fish, so much that the nets began to literally snap, pop. They just began to shred with the weight of this enormous mass of fish. I mean, typically fishermen who fished in that area knew what the normal catch would be, maybe what a good catch would be, maybe what a great catch would be and they had designed usually capable nets that would be able to handle with their time-tested cords, the kind of catch that you would get in the sea of Galilee. Nothing like this had ever happened. They were seeing an expression of divine power because there's no explanation for the volume of fish, other than the fact that Jesus not only knows where they are, but He has commanded an enormous number of fish, way beyond any imaginable school of fish that would ever be swimming together into this one place and he knows now that he's dealing with the Creator of the universe.

In fact, in verse 9 the catch was so massive that amazement had seized everybody. Everybody sees Peter and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken. The term here for amazement is just that. I mean, it's a term that simply means shock. They were absolutely shocked by what they saw. It's a term that's used a couple of times back in chapter 4. They were amazed at His teaching. They never heard anybody teach the way He taught. And in verse 36 they were amazed at His confrontation of the demon. And now they're amazed at His power expressed over nature. Just amazing expression of His power.

Now it tells us, go back if you will to verse 6, the nets began to break and in order to try to deal with what they had on hand, they signaled to their partners in the other boat. The other boat, remember, had been mentioned back in verse 2 as sitting on the edge of the lake and probably belonged to James and John who jumped in their boat since they were partners with Peter in the fishing business, and went out to where they were to try to give him some help. Typically they had one large boat and the boat that took the net to the other extremity would typically be a smaller boat for the purpose of simply taking the net over there and then bringing it back. But there wasn't going to be a large capacity in that smaller boat to carry the tremendous catch and so they called for their partners to put their boat in the water, get out there as fast as they could and help them with this massive catch. They signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. They came. That boat may well have been on the water, we can't say for sure, but nonetheless they came hurriedly, surely, and they got alongside Peter's boat and they began to...after having pulled this net in and the net is snapping and popping and somehow with the use of smaller nets whatever means they would use they started pulling those fish out of that great net and putting them in the hold of the boat. And it says in verse 7 that they filled both of the boats so that they began to sink. This is...this is just beyond anything they had ever experienced. As the fish were hoisted into the hold, the weight began to push the boat under the water so that now the lake is lapping over the edge of the boat. Water begins to come in which, of course, sets the crew in motion to be throwing it back out and trying to make sure that they turned the boat against the waves, or whatever you have to do to keep them

from lapping across the edges and sinking the boat. They managed to cope with that problem, but the point is the catch is so massive that it...it literally goes beyond anything they have ever anticipated because their nets can't contain it and their boats can't hold it. It's just...it's just without human explanation.

Not only did Jesus know the location of the fish, but He commanded the fish to be exactly where He wanted them to be and He commanded them in massive numbers. Now Peter and James and John and their companions and the folks that were there knew the Old Testament. They knew that God is the Creator and God is also the controller of His creation. They knew that Isaiah chapter 50 had said, "Behold I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness, their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst." They knew that if God wanted to He could dry up a lake, He could dry up the sea, He could...He could have all the fish die, they knew that. They also knew what Daniel had said that God was the one who did whatever He wanted to do in the kingdoms of men, that God was the ultimate sovereign over all sovereigns. You remember at the fourth chapter of Daniel at the end of the period Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses after thinking that he was really the king of the world, and he wasn't. And he said that the Most High God is and I praised and blessed and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. And said Nebuchadnezzar, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing and He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." He does whatever He wants with whomever He wants or whatever He wants within His creation.

Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 6, it says, "Thou alone art the Lord. Thou hast made the heavens, the earth and all that is in it, the seas and all that is in them. Thou dost give life to all of them. Thou art the Lord God." And they knew that Psalm 62:11 said, "Power belongs to God," and they knew God was El Shaddai, God the Almighty One. They understood something of the immense and massive power of God.

As I've been telling you as we've been doing our series on creation, I was going to turn it into a book. Well, hopefully that book will be published and available by June called The Battle For The Beginning, and as I've been doing a little more research on the topics of the book, I've been looking a little bit into the power that's contained in the universe because people say, "Well, you know, certainly God couldn't have created the entire universe in six days, it takes a long evolutionary cycle of millions of years to produce this." That's because they don't believe the Bible, one. And two, they don't understand the power of God. God has so much power that creating this universe really was a small thing for Him. He literally spoke it into existence instantaneously and sustains it by the same power and His power is never diminished.

Scientists have discovered some pretty amazing things. I was listening to a tape by an Australian scientist that really was in terms of terminology and breadth and depth a little more than I wanted to deal with, but I did the best as a layman to sort it out. And essentially what the tape was saying is if

you could take a molecule and create a vacuum in that molecule, that is to say divest that molecule of any matter whatsoever, of any chemical compound, no H, no O, no air, no nothing and you had just a pure vacuum of space, they have done this, scientists can do this creating one molecule with nothing in it but a vacuum and there is nothing there but empty space. When they do that they discover a most amazing thing. Moving through that vacuum with nothing in it that is material are short waves and long waves of energy.

What's that? That's why Einstein died in discouragement because he got all the way down to that and couldn't give it a chemical name and couldn't identify where it came from and what sustained it. It is the primary source of power. And what is it? It's the very energy of God. The scientist went on to say, and I'll get the numbers exactly right in the book, I'm not sure exactly in my memory what they are, but he said, "There's enough energy, enough power in those waves and they're undiminished in their power that you could take the waves alone that are in one molecule and you could light all the stars in the universe for ten thousand years." The power is absolutely staggering. We know something about the power because if you split one small atom, you can set loose a nuclear holocaust that ultimately without control can destroy the universe and some day will. There is power. God has power. There is power at a level in the universe that demonstrates that it has to come from some source other than what can be understood by man's scientific enterprises. This is the power of God. And if God can do all of that, it's really no problem for Him to give a little poke of energy to the rear end of a fish to make sure it ends up at a certain point.

I remember when I was a kid in high school, I had a job herding pigs at a huge pig farm in El Monte and we had this big long stick with about twelve batteries in it and we could move those pigs with that baby. I want you to know one shot of that and they were very cooperative. And that's what we did. And whatever energy...level of energy God has to apply to the rear end or the tail of a fish to move him where He wants him, and bend him, He can do that without anything more than a minor thought.

And Peter knew it. He knew exactly what he was dealing with. He was dealing with one who was the source of truth, one who knew everything that could be known and one who had power. He was dealing with truth, omniscience and omnipotence. And that meant, fourthly, that he was in the face of divine holiness because Peter knew that the God of truth, and the God of omniscience, and the God of power is the God of holiness. He knew that God is holy, holy, holy. He knew that. And he knew now that Jesus is God and this is clearly bursting on his mind.

In verse 8 when Simon Peter saw that...when he saw what? When he saw the divine display, when he saw this omniscience and this omnipotence in action along with the message of the words of God that had come, he knew in whose presence he stood. "And he fell down at Jesus' feet," the actual Greek says, "His knees." He fell down at Jesus' knees.

Fishing was Peter's thing, you know. He...he knew about fishing. But this was not fishing. What he had seen was not fishing. Knowing where the fish are and controlling them, that's not fishing. This was supernatural. This had no human explanation. Peter had heard Jesus teaching about the Kingdom. He had heard Jesus teaching about repentance and salvation and forgiveness. He had heard that because he was sitting in the boat, his boat while Jesus was teaching it. And he had heard it in the synagogue just prior in the record of chapter 4. And no doubt he had discussed it with Jesus when Jesus spent the day at his house and healed his wife's mother. But no teaching left to itself would have brought Peter to where the Lord wanted him to come apparently. And so the Lord had a very special manifestation for Peter that shocked him and that was this occasion because where the Lord wanted to get Peter is what I've been saying at the concert, where the Lord wanted to get Peter was the place of recognizing his sinfulness. And this is the first time we have that indication. Peter had his initial call as recorded in John 1, there was a confirmation of that initial call to follow Jesus recorded in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, parallel passages. But in neither of those passages is there any discussion on Peter's part about his sinfulness. But now Peter knows something. Whoever he thought Jesus was when they first met, whoever he thought Jesus was at that second confirmation, whoever he thought Jesus was in the synagogue, and whoever he thought he was at home when He healed his mother-in-law, and whoever he thought he was when he...when he was teaching that day on the shore at the lake now there are no doubts for this moment, anyway, that this is God because verse 8 says when he saw that he fell at Jesus' feet and this is...this is the prostration of a worshiper. But not just a worshiper, a worshiper who is frankly terrified because look at his words, "And he said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" This is that penitence that Jesus is after. This is that poor prisoner, blind and oppressed, that Jesus said He had come to preach the gospel to in reciting the words of Isaiah 61. This is exactly the kind of attitude Jesus was looking for, not an attitude of confidence, not an attitude of self-satisfaction, not an attitude of religious achievement, not an attitude of self-righteousness, but an attitude of brokenness.

And it's interesting to me that Luke always refers to Simon as Simon, up until chapter 6 verse 14, when you have the listing of the Apostles and after that He refers to him as Peter. He is Simon up to 6:14, he's Peter after that. And he's never Simon Peter, except here. Why is he Simon Peter here? And I think the answer is because this is where Simon becomes Peter. This is where the real transformation takes place, and so He gives him the full name. This is Simon Peter. This is the moment of his penitence. This is the first time in the gospel of Luke that someone is brought to the recognition of their sinfulness. And Peter is crushed because he knows he's in the presence of holy God, that's why he reacts this way. He is stunned by the presence of God and is only aware then of his sin because he knows if he can see God, God can see him and he sees holiness and God sees sin. And it's very traumatizing and it's very intimidating and it's very terrifying and he says, "Go away...go away." He's afraid for his life, calls Him "O Lord," and I think he means by that at this point, "God." In the Septuagint God is translated kurios, the word for Lord. This is worship of the holy one. When he falls on his knees, that's worship. He knew not to worship anybody but God. And then when he calls Him Lord, I think he means it in the...in the highest sense possible. The Old Testament

is very clear that God is holy. Peter knew it very well. He knows he's in the presence of God and he says, "Go away...go away." The trauma, the self-consciousness, the guilt, the shame, the sense of unworthiness, the terror, the fright and he can't restrain himself from telling the Lord to get out of his presence. It's just too intimidating.

Occasionally we have discussions about people who leave Grace Church. And somebody will say, "Well they went here...or they went there...they go over here for this reason, or that reason, the other reason." I always have a sort of a standard thought and I...I believe people leave this church primarily, for the most part, for one reason, unless they're relocated somewhere or unless there's some constraints that really demand it, I believe people leave this church primarily because it intimidates them because being brought even on the human level the best way we can do it face-to-face with the Creator, face-to-face with holy God is something they seek to avoid. And that's just in a human environment. That's just...that's just here in the church. But to come and enter in to a place where God is exalted, God is glorified, His Word is lifted up, His name is preached, His...this for the person who doesn't really want to deal with their sin is an intimidating environment. But that's...that's nothing compared to literally being in a small boat with the Creator. That's why in Mark 4:41 when Jesus was in the boat and they said, "We're going to drown." And He stopped the storm, it says they were afraid and then it says they were very much afraid because it was far more frightening to have God in your boat than have a storm outside. They were terrified. They knew what they were dealing with, the Creator.

That's why Abraham in Genesis 18:27 says, "I am speaking to the Lord? Who am but dust and ashes." This can't be happening. Dust and ashes were a symbol of penitence. That's what Job said. He said, Job 42, "I now see You with my eyes and I repent in dust and ashes." Then there's Isaiah who sees the Lord and says, "Curse me, damn me, woe is me, I'm disintegrating, I'm a man with a dirty mouth," and all he can see about himself is his wretchedness. Then there's Manoah, I love the story of Manoah in the thirteenth chapter of Judges. Manoah has an encounter with the angel of the Lord, a preincarnate appearance of Christ, the second member of the Trinity comes and appears to Manoah and he goes home and he says to his wife, "I've seen the Lord, we'll die...we will die." And then there's Ezekiel who has a vision of God in Ezekiel chapter 1 and falls over in a coma. Then there's John in Revelation 1 who has a vision of the glorified Christ and it says he fell over like a dead person he was so traumatized.

One of the most interesting statements of all in regard to this is found in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. God is giving the law and in verse 19 they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen, but let not God speak to us lest we die." Moses, please we don't mind talking to you, don't bring God down here. We're dead. You see, that's the sense of sin, the overwhelming sense of sin. That's the publican in Luke 18 beating his chest. He won't even look up. He won't lift his eyes. He's afraid somehow that God might see who he is and he's crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." It's the disciples in Matthew 17 on the Mount of Transfiguration who see the glory of Christ and fall over

in a...in a coma. Literally frightened into unconsciousness. This is what God seeks in Isaiah 66:1 and 5, a person with a broken and contrite heart. This is someone who sees their sin and you can't really see your sin until you see God. And that's why the emphasis of ministry always has to be to exalt God, to lift up God, to manifest His glory, His holiness cause it's when we see Him for who He is that we see us for who we are.

So here was Peter...broken, penitent, overwhelmed by his sin, frightened, terrified. He's in the presence of holiness. This is an affirmation on Peter's part that he is meeting the divine One. "Depart from me for I am sinful, O Lord." And he's affirming in saying that the Lord is sinless. "You don't deserve to be in my presence, I don't deserve to be in Your presence. We don't have anything in common. Holiness is separation and, Lord, it's unfitting for You to be near me," that's what he's saying.

And why did he feel this way? Well verse 9 says, "Because of the amazement that had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken." There was just no human explanation. This is God. And it was the same with, verse 10 says, with James and John. They had exactly the same reaction, the sons of Zebedee. They were partners, koinonos, partners in the business with Simon. And they were all literally shaken to the core.

Now in the terror of this moment Peter wants to send the Lord away, but the Lord wants to pull Peter closer. What from Peter's viewpoint is so frightening that he wants to run is so encouraging to the Lord that He wants to embrace Peter. At the very point in which the sinner feels the most alienation is the point at which the Savior is seeking reconciliation. And here was Peter and his two buddies, James and John, wanting to run when Jesus wanted to embrace them, wanting alienation when Jesus sought reconciliation. This is the glorious moment of their repentance.

And that brings us to the final attribute of God that is demonstrated here, divine mercy. Peter was overwhelmed with his sin. We can certainly assume that James and John were and perhaps others. They were broken and contrite, just what the Lord was seeking. You remember, it was Isaiah who thought he was so unworthy that he was going to be destroyed, and it turned out that the Lord called him into ministry. It was Job who thought that he was...he was the worst of sinners and needed to repent in dust and ashes, that God blessed beyond imagination. It was John who because of his sinful life in the presence of the vision of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1 fell over out of sheer terror in a dead faint. And the Lord awakened him, told him to get up and take his pen and serve Him by writing the Revelation.

Just at the point where you think you're on the brink of damnation because of your sin, you're at the brink of reconciliation because of mercy. And I love this in verse 10, Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear," or perhaps better, "Stop being terrified," phobeo from which we get phobia. Stop being terrified. You don't need to be terrified. And that's the kind of fear he was feeling, it was terror of being in the

presence of holy God and being on the brink of divine judgment. Stop being terrified.

Now let me just say as a footnote. There is a healthy fear of God. There is a positive fear of God. We could go a lot of places in the Bible to demonstrate it, but let me simplify it, if I can. There is a statement in the fourth verse of Deuteronomy 10 that defines this proper fear. Just listen to this. Deuteronomy 10:4 says, "You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him...listen to this...and cling to Him." There is the fear that seeks to run and there is the fear that seeks to cling. If a child has managed to put himself in a very precarious position by some foolish things, there are some fathers who may come and castigate the child and brutalize the child and criticize the child, be unmerciful to the child and the child would rather work his way out of his dilemma without the father because he fears the father's hostilities. On the other hand, there are children who are by their own foolishness found in situations of difficulty and perhaps danger crying out with all their might for a father to cling to because they understand the love and the tenderness of that father who will forgive their folly and rescue them.

There is the terror of the sinner who fears the judgment of God. There is the healthy reverence and wonder and awe and love and adoration of the child who wants to cling to a father who is the Father of mercies, as Paul calls God in Corinthians. And so we want the fear that clings, the fear that says I can't make it on my own. The fear that says You are my Redeemer, my Savior, my Lord, my Master. You are the object of my love, my affection, my worship, my praise, my adoration, my devotion. I want to keep Your commandments. I want to listen to Your voice. I want to serve You. I want to follow You. That's the fear that clings. And for the sinner there is that fear that terrifies and wants to run. That's why I say there are people who come even here and when God is displayed and God is manifest and the glory of God is shown in the face of Jesus Christ, it's a very intimidating thing. And those who love their sin want to run. Those who are, in a sense, unmasked by it but want to continue the game of hiding, flee. But for us who desire mercy, we cling, don't we? The same God can create terror in the unrepentant sinner and calm in the penitent sinner.

What does the Lord your God require from you, says Deuteronomy 10:12 and 13? But to fear the Lord your God. What does that mean? To walk in all His ways. To love Him. To serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes. That's the positive kind of fear. That's respect. But Peter was in terror and so Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, stop being terrified." And then He says this, and here's where mercy takes you, "From now on you will be catching men."

Let me tell you, you can't do that if you don't belong to the Kingdom and the King. You can't do that if you don't enjoy the presence of the Lord, the power of the Lord, the power of His Spirit. This in my mind is an affirmation of the fact that the Lord had drawn Peter into His Kingdom and into His Kingdom enterprise as well as James and John.

This is wonderful. Isaiah feared that he would be destroyed. Instead he was called to preach. John feared that he would be destroyed. Instead he was called to write. Peter feared that he would be destroyed. Instead he was called to preach, along with his friends. You never have to be afraid to admit your sin, that's the point at which you must come to receive mercy. Here is the formalizing of the call of Peter and James and John into that intimate inner circle that they enjoyed through the whole ministry of Jesus. The most penitent, the most penitent is the one who receives the most mercy and becomes the most qualified to accompany the Lord in the great salvation mission. This is kind of where the great commission starts.

By the way, "you will be catching men," interesting Greek word, *zograo* from two words, *greo*, to catch and *zoen*, life. You're going to catch alive, is what it means. They spent their life catching fish dead, now they're going to catch men alive. You catch fish for the purpose of killing them, you catch men for the purpose of giving them life. It's an astonishing mercy, my friend, that not only does God forgive the sinner who is overwhelmed by his sin in the presence of the holiness of God, not only does God forgive the sinner, but God clings, God pulls that sinner in in an embrace in which He chooses to use that sinner in His salvation enterprise. And we then become ambassadors for Christ, don't we? We become the missionary force that fulfilled the great commission.

Well the sovereign power of God had done its mighty work in the hearts of these men and verse 11 says, "When they had brought their boats to land, both boats, both Peter, James and John and when they brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him."

Now let me tell you, folks. This is the catch of all catches that they had dreamed of their whole fishing career and it might have been a temptation to say, "Well, I think the better plan than us following You to catch men is You come with us and we'll really catch fish." I mean, the dawning of a new day. This...this may have been...who knows how much money this was worth, what this could have done in catapulting their career to another level. What more boats they could have bought. What perhaps more equipment they could have bought, men they could have hired to increase the business. But here they are at the very pinnacle, here they are having made the catch of all catches in the history of fishing and it says they brought their boats to land, got out of the boats, left everything, followed Him.

That was history. That was history. All the activities of their life to that point passed. Initially they had followed Him part-time and this was the full-time. This was the life they would live all the way to their death. From this moment on they were permanently engaged in catching people in God's salvation net. The highest calling in life, the great commission. The word followed is used in Luke as a technical term for discipleship. You see it about five times in chapter 9, a couple of times in chapter 18. They became disciples.

That's the message for you, friends. Jesus has appeared, He is God. He has come into the world. He is God. We know He's God because He's the source of truth, knowledge, power, holiness, mercy. Only God gives mercy to sinners. Only God calls sinners to reconciliation to Himself and commissions them to the great task of evangelization, catching men alive. This is God. They know it. And when they are called, they will not resist. They see their sin. They see their Savior. Their Savior embraces them in mercy. They embrace Him in obedience. And together they will preach the gospel that saves souls.

How about you? Have you come to that point in recognition of your own sin? Have you come to the point where you wanted to run from God only to be embraced by Him through faith in Jesus Christ? Feeling yourself utterly unworthy, do you now understand that you're called to be His disciple? Thinking you're not even worthy to be a disciple, you have become worthy to become a proclaimer of the gospel. And now, you like them, can give your life to that. Not that you need to leave your career but wherever it is in your life that you live and move and have your being, that's the place where you have to live your life for the advancement of the gospel and catch men alive. That's the Savior's work to which all of us have been called.

Father, our calling is the noblest calling of all. Nothing comes close in comparison to catch men alive, to catch them for life, eternal life, by the proclamation of the gospel. And how unworthy we are. How when we come face-to-face with You we want to run the other way, but we've learned that You're a God of mercy and so we cling. Forgive our trespasses, our sins. They are not the truest reflection of us. They are the things we don't want to do. They're part of that principle operating in our flesh against the law of our mind which loves You and Your Word. We thank You for Your forgiveness. We thank You that in spite of our sinfulness You embrace us and we find You one to whom we can cling for there's mercy and grace to help in time of need. And there's usefulness in this glorious high calling to live a life that matters eternally, not just a life that matters temporally in which we do our little thing in this world and when we die it's over, but all that we do in catching men lasts forever. And wherever we are in this world in whatever realm of influence, may we see our enterprise of ministry of the gospel to catch men alive. Use us in that way for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).