

Keynotes from Pastor Tim Gamston's YouTube Sermon

on Sunday 26th April 2020

Jesus, friend of sinners – Confession

(Please read these notes whilst watching or listening to the sermon)

Luke 5:1-11 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

When you confess your failures to some people, they fly into a rage and you suffer from a tongue-lashing or worse. We try to hide our failures from people like that.

What if God was like that and every time we got something wrong and confessed it to him, he flew into a rage? You wouldn't dare go to a God like that. Instead you would try to sort your own sins out.

However, we don't need to confess our sin to God for God to know the sins we've committed.

The God of the Bible sees everything – nothing we are, say, do or look at is hidden from him. He sees every sin we commit before we confess anything to him. We may try to deny our sin or to deny God's existence but we can't avoid God. So the question is does he fly into a rage when we get things wrong?

We need to know what God is like, and Jesus Christ perfectly reveals this to us. The God who came to live on earth is the friend of sinners – not so that we stay in our sinful way of life but in order to:

- bring us into a fulfilling relationship with him
- give us lives that have meaning and purpose

Those who come to Jesus, humbly confessing their sin, meet a gracious Saviour who says “Come work for me”

Luke 5:1-3 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

Jesus is completely in control of events here – he gets in the boat belonging to Peter, because he is fishing for Peter. He is on a mission to find Peter so that he can reveal Peter's sin, and show him the grace of God.

Jesus is still on that same mission today. He wants to find you and me to:

- Bring us into friendship with himself
- Use us in the greatest mission the world has ever known
- Give meaning and purpose to our lives

He does this by getting into our boat through Christian friends or family members who pray for you or keep inviting you to church. When Jesus gets into our boat, we find ourselves confronted with three truths.

1. Jesus confronts us with the holiness of God.

- Peter is a professional fisherman. Jesus is the son of a carpenter, yet he tells the fisherman how to catch fish. **w4-5⁴** And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” **5** And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

- Peter responds with obedience to this command, despite having fished all night and caught nothing, an act which nets him more fish than he has ever caught before.

Peter has this response to what has happened:

v8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'.

He knows:

- This is a miracle but it isn't about the fish
- He has seen the power and presence of God
- God has come near to him, but Peter's sin puts distance between him and God
- Because of his sin, he can't stand in the presence of a holy God – he can only fall on his knees and express his unworthiness, asking Jesus to leave him alone.

Peter is experiencing what we encounter when we first meet with Jesus. He makes us feel uncomfortable, and we can't bear the shame of being in his presence. **Have you ever experienced God in this way?**

- Unless we do, we shall never see ourselves as the sinners we are.
- It is only as we come into the light of Christ's perfect holiness that our sin is exposed.

We may wonder why we should want to come near to Jesus and to feel worse about ourselves than we already do.

- One day, we will all have to come near to the living God of heaven, when Jesus comes back to this earth. We will see him in all his holiness, and discover how sinful we really are when it is too late to do anything about it, because it is the day of final judgment.

It is better to discover we are sinners now, because Jesus confronts us with a second truth

2. Jesus confronts us with the grace of God

Peter is right to be afraid as a self-confessed sinner standing in the presence of a God whose holiness demands justice. God has been wronged by our sin:

- Sin essentially is ignoring God and living our lives as if he doesn't exist or doesn't matter.
- We don't want God to interfere in our lives, unless there's some material benefit for us
- If he's going to make us uncomfortable, we want him to go away

In his justice, God gives us what we think we want – he distances himself from us, not just for this life but for eternity. **You may want to get rid of God forever, but the God you don't want is also the God who gives you life and everything that is good.** For him to leave you means losing that forever, so that you never experience the goodness of God again.

- In asking Jesus to go away, Peter is (probably unwittingly) asking for what he knows he deserves

We might expect Jesus to go away but he doesn't. v10 And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

- Peter has confessed his sin publicly, and knows he deserves God's judgment
- Jesus responds by saying don't be afraid – come and join me
- Instead of condemnation, Peter receives grace.
- Jesus the holy God becomes a friend to Peter the sinner

How is that possible?

- Jesus would suffer Peter's condemnation for him, being separated from God the Father in Peter's place on the cross, so that Peter could enjoy God's friendship.
- This is true for us too. Because Jesus paid for our sin through his death, and earned righteousness for us through his own obedience, we can enjoy the friendship of God.

The promise is this: **1 John 1:8-9** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Is that your experience - to have seen yourself as a sinner in the light of Jesus' holiness, and then to have seen the grace of God in the face of Jesus, as he says to you "Do not be afraid"?

If you know Jesus as the friend of sinners, then you will have been confronted with the third truth.

3. Jesus confronts us with the worth of God

Jesus calls Peter to a life of fishing for others to join Jesus' mission. Peter will confront sinners with the light of God's holiness, and offer them the grace of God, as Jesus works by his Spirit to make the mission successful.

What is Peter's response? v11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left **everything** and followed him.

- They left all that they had to follow Jesus, because they discovered in him a greater treasure than fish, money, boats, business and even family.
- What Peter could have valued above Jesus on that day no longer exists, but **Jesus still lives.**

When we are confronted with the grace of God in Christ, we hear Jesus say don't be afraid – come work with me.

We treasure Christ above all things and that is one way we know we have been truly saved.

We come to fully appreciate what a great Saviour we have when we see what Jesus has done for us.