

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 10, 2019

Text: Luke 5:1-11

Theme: "This is Not Working"

When things don't work that's frustrating. How often has that disrupted our plans or put a damper on our day? It could be a dead battery in our car, and a malfunctioning sensor that keeps the car from starting. There's a lot of things that can not work on a car. Have you ever had the experience of a stuck horn? I've had that happen twice. Appliances can also not work. The washer is isn't washing, the dryer isn't drying and the refrigerator is not refrigerating.. Of course we have the joys of trouble with technology. There is software update you don't recall asking for and suddenly your screen is not the same. The printer may refuse to print. The internet connection disconnects. There are a lot of things that can not work.

Things not working can be life threatening, life disrupting, or just a pain. If there is something that needs fixing maybe you can fix or maybe you can't. Whatever it is that needs fixing, there are usually tools involved. I have a few here. I have this tape measure, this 10 oz, short handled hammer, there needle nose pliers, this multi-end screwdriver, and duct tape. This is high quality duct tape, not the cheap stuff. I think you have heard me say before, you don't want to buy the cheap stuff; that's a waste of money. With the good stuff you can fix a lot of things, at least for a

little while. If you have having software issue with your computer, you can use it to cover the screen.

Trying to fix what is not working can be frustrating, wears you down. Then some expert comes along to tell you what needs to be done. We may not always find that helpful. “What are you talking about? I’ve already tried that. It’s not going to work!”

So things may not be working, but there’s always a lot of work to do. We work at life whether it is all working or not. We go about our daily routine such as working, going to school, tending to household duties and responsibilities, caring for family members, involvement in the community. We may wear many different hats and a lot is expected. Then more responsibilities are added. We may have to cover for someone else for a while. You thought you can take on more and be okay, but it’s not so okay.

There may be a lot of different tools to use. Something is broken and needs fixing. Maybe you need a good grip to hold it together long enough so you can tape it. It could be you need to hammer home a point, or you just need to do a little measuring to assess the need. You have tools and you have been trained to use them for the work at hand. We work at it.

Then there is those matters in our faith routine. There is your own faith. You would like to do more and know more, to have a better grip on the application of your faith to life. There is the matter of faith matters in the life of our friends and family. The matter may be that it doesn’t look

like it matters for them. What has happened to their faith? They face some real challenges. Then there are those who seem to be ticked off about your faith or the expression of it. Yes, there is a lot to work at.

There was a lot of work to be done down by the Lake of Gennesaret, which more often we know as the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was working there. He had said, “It is necessary for me to go to other towns to bring the good news of the kingdom of God for this is why I was sent.” (Luke 4:43) In 4:44 we learn that Jesus was going to these different town in Judea preaching in their synagogues. Well today He is preaching and it’s not in Judea and it’s not in synagogues. It’s here along the lake. People are eager to hear; they are pressing up against Him. He uses the tools at hand to have a better platform from which to teach. There are boats by the lake, one of those belonging to Simon. The fishermen has disembarked from them and were washing their nets. He gets into Simon’s boat and asks him to put out just a little, not far. And now it’s perfect. He sits in the boat while the crowd gathered on the shore can look down and listen. Jesus is working.

So were the fishermen. It is Simon, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were partners in the fishing business we are told. There is no mention here of Andrew, Simon’s brother, but that doesn’t mean that he was not present. If you were going to survive as fishermen you had to catch some fish. They had the tools and the know how to get it done. That work could include long and late hours. They had taken the boats out

and let down the nets for a catch. They were not novices or rookies as this fishing business. It was not a hobby; it was their livelihood.

They had the tools and knew what they were doing, but it wasn't working. They had thrown out their nets and brought them in again and again. How many times could you do that in a night? But the catch had always been the same, nothing! So surely frustrated, they called it a day, or a night. They were washing their nets and putting them in order. It was time to go home, get some rest, maybe something to eat, and then come back and get after it again later. But their plans turn out not to be working. They are disrupted.

Jesus is the disrupter. They had to hear His teaching and they were probably amazed. His teaching was with authority. He also demonstrated authority over sickness and unclean spirits. Events of John 1 indicate that at least one of them had met Him before, Simon, but likely more of them. Jesus would heal Simon's mother-in-law. We saw that last week in chapter 4, but it may be this fishing event happened before that even though it's in chapter 5. So they are here on the lake, tending to their fishing business when Jesus shakes up their plans. They would have learned a lot hearing Jesus's words even as they busied themselves with their nets.

Jesus finished teaching. Now things change. Jesus goes from authoritative teacher to unsolicited fishing guide. Jesus tells Simon to put out into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. Simon points out that's exactly what they had been doing it, doing it all night with no result. He's may be thinking, "this is just crazy advice!" It's not working.

Life certainly doesn't work the way we would like it. As said before stuff breaks, life gets stressful and can be pretty challenging. We can get jaded and cynical about it all. We may have tools to do something about it, but we don't want to pick them up, or we do but really do have a good grip. It happens in our daily matters and it happens in faith matters. Yes, things don't work, not the way we would like it. We haven't mastered this not sinning thing. There is not a good reaction to my mention of faith. We may not be ready to pick up the tool and try again.

We may take up tools in the wrong way. Someone may need a good hammering or a good squeezing, or a jab and a twist of displeasure. We may be all too ready to take a good measure of our brother's shortcomings and even take a little pleasure in that. Things not working is only made worse by wrong working.

But back to Jesus. Jesus is working and His work works. He is doing some trust management work. The fishermen are about to learn more of the full authority of the One who teaches with authority. The One who created the fish knows where they can be found. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Simon complies, but surely is not hopeful. Maybe he's thinking, 'Okay, we'll let them down, but you will see what a waste of time it is.' Simon is the one surprised. It is the biggest catch ever! The fish couldn't get into the net fast enough. The nets are breaking. James and John come in to help and soon the boats are in danger of sinking from the catch.

They have witnessed something great, Someone great. Simon is overcome in His presence. This proud man has been brought to his knees. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” (v 8) Is his fear a bit like that of demon from last week, fear of being destroyed? Jesus will turn that fear away. He has not come to destroy Peter but to save him and use him in catching other with the message of salvation.

Jesus is working, the Father is working. He tells us in John (5:17) the works He is doing are the works of God and the words He is speaking is the Word of God. He came to preach the Gospel. He came to be the Gospel. He came to seek and to save the lost, like Simon, like James and John, like you and me. He saves by fulfilling and giving, fulfilling all righteousness and giving His life as a ransom. He lays it down in love and obedience, and take it up again in power and victory.

In Him the wages of our brokenness has been paid, received by Him in our place. We are washed in Him, a washing a lot cleaner than that of those nets. Sin and guilt are washed away. That washing is for broken people like us. We begin our “Everyone His Witness” training today after worship. I read from the participant book, “Witnessing is about Jesus wanting to come to the aid of and to be with broken people; it's about Jesus "having to do with" us. That Jesus would want to have to do with us comes as a surprise-and it should. We are the ones who have rebelled against Him. Our horrible and hopeless spiritual condition is our own fault. The pain, suffering, and death of this world are precisely what we deserve. In fact, we deserve worse. By our sin, we deserve God's

judgment, condemnation, and eternal suffering.... In order to help us, He had to endure the judgment, condemnation, and death that we deserve.

Why would Jesus want anything to do with us? (*Everyone One His Witness*, page 20). Jesus came to bind up the broken hearted, to create new hearts.

Jesus works through the tools. Jesus has the fishermen use the tools of the trade. The fish don't jump into the boat. Jesus blesses the labor of the fishermen. God has given us the tools. It all looks pretty ordinary, but God works the extraordinary. He gives us His Word. He gives us water and wine and bread. The Spirit is at work through these at God's promise to make alive and strengthen. Jesus tells Simon from now on he will catch something much greater than fish, men. Before He caught fish for death, but now it will be men for life.

Jesus is still catching for life through the church. God works through the tools, only through the tools has He promised to work to bring to faith. His fishing is through us. It is not lazily fishing from the deck hoping not to be bothered by the fish. It's from out in the water, really out in the water, even down in the water in the environs of our everyday routines. It's not flashing a shiny lure, or casting an entangling net. It is through a hand that meets the need and a mouth that speaks the truth in love. It is from one who knows the trouble and frustration, but who also knows the Savior, the better way of life, the way that is actually life.

It may not be working, not the way we would like. Actually, we could say because of sin it's everything's not working. But there is redemption and restoration in the perfect work of Jesus. We use the tools in faith and

obedience, trusting our Lord to do His work and bring His results. For
Jesus' sake. Amen