



When a Big Catch Becomes Small Fry

What I want us to see this morning, with Simon, is that Jesus is interested in what we care about. Our hopes and desires are not insignificant. We see in today's passage that Jesus is on mission to save the lost and he then enlists them onto His mission. And Jesus's mission is literally live-saving, dead-raising, hell-stealing stuff. Jesus meets Simon in the middle of his day-to-day life and involves himself in what really matters to Simon and, in

doing so, Simon's eyes are opened. What was once so big for Simon (his fishing business) pales in comparison when in the presence of Jesus. It is not that this big thing in his life gets smaller, it is that in order to see and know Jesus, Simon's vision has to expand. When beholding Jesus, THE true big thing, your frame of reference grows, so everything else is smaller. The truth of the matter is when we grasp that Jesus is sovereign over what matters most, then he will become what matters most. And when Jesus matters most, like Simon, it determines a new direction in life. So let's work through it, with your Bibles open.

1. Jesus Seeks (v1-5) Jesus is the hot topic in town. He has been healing all those who are ill. He's been driving out demons from people who have been suffering greatly for so long. He's also preaching up a storm around the synagogues in Judea and, like Morgan said last week, Jesus was unlike anyone else who was preaching in that day. Of course he was. He's Jesus! So we come to chapter 5 and we see that people want to hear from him as he speaks "the word of God." (v1) Jesus steps into a boat so he can talk to the crowds from there. It is no coincidence that this is Simon's boat. Jesus has a purpose. He is intentionally seeking out Simon and moving into Simon's space to engage with him. Jesus turns away from this great crowd and gives his attention to just one person. So often we think that numbers are the most important thing. If lots of people come then we think the ministry is doing well, but if we have no one then we think the ministry is doing poorly. Obviously, there are reasons why numbers go up and down, and we need to truly assess whether our efforts are worth it and think about what is causing the fluctuation in numbers. But notice how big numbers aren't Jesus's primary concern. He could've kept talking and engaging with the big crowd, and if he had done that, the crowd would have almost certainly have continued to grow. However, Jesus had bigger things to do so he turns and focuses on Simon. Instead of starting with small talk, Jesus gets right under Simon's grill and tells the fisherman how to fish. He's happy with Jesus using his boat for preaching about God and stuff, but 'don't start getting involved in my fishing'. How many of us are like that? We're not ready for Jesus to knock down the wall dividing things that are spiritual, and things that are practical. We're not ready to see our whole life as ministry. Or maybe something else was going on. Or maybe Simon didn't believe Jesus would be interested in what mattered to him. How true is that of us? Maybe it's our care of someone we love who is ill. Maybe it's our job that no one else cares about. Maybe it's our parenting, or our finances, or our ongoing wrestle from childhood difficulties. Maybe it's our sleepless nights, or our mental health. Simon did not expect Jesus to step into what mattered to him. So when Jesus tells him to put out his nets, his response is honest. "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." (v5) We can read it both ways can't we? I'm the fisherman Jesus, stick to the teaching, OR, this is a hard gig Jesus, my life depends upon it and last night was a fail. I don't know if I can take many more failure." He's honest, but look again at verse 5, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." Then the big 'but'! "But because you say so, I will let down the nets." Simon knew of Jesus, but he wasn't sure that Jesus cared enough to step into his big thing. But Jesus was seeking out Simon. If today you are like Simon and you know of Jesus, but you don't know Jesus as your Saviour, as the one who formed and is interested in your inmost being, as the one who cares about you more than you will ever know. Then hear today the words of Jesus to the church of Laodicea, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Here Jesus is inviting the church to experience intimate fellowship with Him. Jesus is knocking on the door of your life and asking you to open the door. Not just the door to the respectable parts of your life, but the door to the

bits you care about most, the most painful parts, the deep parts. Jesus seeks Simon like he seeks you. Then he reveals.

2. Jesus Reveals (v6-10a) Jesus reveals his power over what matters most to Simon. The catch of fish was miraculous. His mother-in-law being healed was important for Simon, but the most important thing for him was fishing. It was his livelihood. Seeing not only Jesus' care and power in this area of his life was massive. It changed everything. Jesus is very interested in what makes you tick, your grief and pain, the demands and pressures. Stop believing the lie that God does not care about your ongoing battles and difficulties. Stop believing the lie that God is disinterested in you. I can prove it to you now because as Jesus sought out Simon, he seeks out you too. Jesus died a sinner's death for the sin that you are guilty of. Jesus paid the sinner's price for sin that you did. Jesus rose to new life and offers that new life to you. And if Jesus did that, does that not prove that he cares about you and loves you? Jesus did that while you were still His enemy. So, stop kidding yourself that you have anything to prove to God, or that He does not care about you.

Paul wrote this to church in Rome, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32) Jesus seeks out sinners, forgives sinners and recruits sinners to gain other sinners. It is what we see Jesus doing here with Simon, and it is what Jesus is doing with you. Jesus sought out Simon and showed his care for all of Simon's life but not only his care but His power to bring change over the key area in his life. "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (v8) Simon's view of Jesus has just changed. No longer is he calling Jesus master as in verse 5 but he is his Lord. When you truly behold the Lord, you see your sinfulness in comparison with his glory. A holy presence brings destruction to those who are unholy. Those who know themselves to be sinners are the most responsive to Jesus. While those who regard themselves as religiously virtuous and look down their noses on sinners, regard Jesus with antagonism. Look at Simon here, on his knees, before Jesus, calling Him Lord.

In the face of the Lord, our perspective changes. What was once so big for Simon, pales in comparison in the presence of Jesus. It is not that this big thing in his life gets smaller, it is that in order to see and know Jesus his vision had to expand. When beholding Jesus, your frame of reference grows and everything else gets smaller. What looks massive compared with earth, Saturn or Jupiter, pales in comparison to the sun. But then the sun even looks tiny compared with some of the other stars out there. This is what happens when we encounter Jesus. Our frame of reference gets much larger. When we encounter Jesus, it doesn't belittle our big things in life. It doesn't make light of the real things that we are processing and dealing with. As we grow in maturity and delight of Jesus, as we learn about him and love him more and more, the things of earth are put into perspective. Because something far, far, far greater is here. Something magnificent. SOMEONE magnificent. And His name is Jesus. So, Jesus seeks out sinners, He reveals himself to sinners and we see that Jesus recruits sinners as apprentices.

3. Jesus Apprentices (v10b-11) Jesus brings Simon alongside him into an apprenticeship. "Don't be afraid, from now on you will fish for people." Jesus seeks sinners, forgives sinners and recruits sinners to win other sinners. If Jesus is sovereign over our big things, he must become THE big thing.

There is a cost to following Jesus. We see that Simon, and seemingly those with him, James and John, "left everything and followed Him." (v10) Obedience to Jesus always determines a new direction in life. Following Jesus does not always mean quitting your job and going on overseas mission or becoming a pastor. That is not what it means all the time. We ought to seriously, prayerfully, consider whether we should engage in overseas mission. But also, there are people in your workplace, on your street, in your family and friends that do not know the gospel and need to hear it. Obeying Jesus might look like staying in your work. It might look like staying in your vocation and living as a Christian. It might look like continuing to spend time with your friends and neighbours as a Christian, proclaiming the gospel. Like Simon, you'll be doing it with Jesus as His apprentice. Having been sought by Jesus, forgiven by Jesus and recruited by Jesus, he may in his grace use you to gain other sinners for his glory and his kingdom.