

Notes for Next Sunday

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 6:1-13). These verses are about God calling Isaiah to prophesy about coming exile of Judah to Babylon. In verses 1-4 Isaiah sees a very scene vision of the Lord and some angels. Isaiah knows that humans cannot see God and live and he say as much in verse 5. The angel uses live coal from the altar to make Isaiah's lips clean. In verse 6 responds with the well-known words, "Here am I. Send me!" The Isaiah is told that his message will not be heeded and that Judah will go into exile to Babylon. The last words point to the hope of Christ.

Epistle (1 Corinthians 14:12b-20). Paul concludes his teaching on spiritual gifts. He again puts a strong emphasis having the gift be helpful to others. In these verses Paul especially dwells on the speaking in tongues. The Corinthians had had problems with wanting to show off when it came to spiritual gifts. This was way from them to have some "one-upmanship" on others. This was especially true when it came to speaking in tongues. Paul point is well made with when he says, "I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue." (Verse 19)

Gospel (Luke 5:1-11). In this text Jesus calls Peter, James and John to become His disciples. He does this by persuading Peter to go out fishing even though Peter and his crew had caught nothing all night. Peter is skeptical but does as Jesus says. The result is an amazing number of fish. James and John were Peter's partners. Jesus challenges the three to become fishers of men.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

FIRST READING – Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." ⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Ch 6 Isaiah's vision is the climax of his message in chs 1-5. This glimpse of God's glory (vv 1-5; Jn 12:41), validates his message from God in this Book. (TLSB)

6:1 *the year that King Uzziah died.* † 740 B.C. Isaiah’s commission probably preceded his preaching ministry; the account was postponed to serve as a climax to the opening series of oracles and to provide warrant for the shocking announcements of judgment they contain. The people had mocked the “Holy One of Israel” (5:19), and now he has commissioned Isaiah to call them to account. Uzziah reigned from 792 to 740 and was a powerful king. When he insisted on burning incense in the temple, however, he was struck with leprosy and remained leprous until his death (2Ch 26:16–21). He was also called Azariah (2Ki 14:21; 2Ch 26:1). (CSB)

Also called Azariah. Powerful king of Judah (792–740 BC; 2Ki 15:1–7; 2Ch 26). Human monarchs come and go, but God always reigns. (TLSB)

I saw. Probably in a vision in the temple. (CSB)

throne. The King of the universe is described in images of power and might. The ark of the covenant, kept in the Most Holy Place in the temple, was covered with two cherubim. God is “enthroned on the cherubim” (1Sm 4:4; 2Sm 6:2; Ps 80:1). (TLSB)

high and lifted. † The same Hebrew words are applied to God in 57:15, and similar terms are used of the suffering servant in 52:13. (CSB)

train of his robe. A long, flowing garment. Cf. the robe of the “son of man” in Rev 1:13. (CSB)

The long flowing trail of the royal garment in which the King of kings appeared to Isaiah was so large that it “filled the temple.” (May refer to the smoke of the incense offering; cf vv 4, 6.) (TLSB)

filled the temple – This indicates the completeness of God’s rule and is a huge contrast to Uzziah. This would be of great comfort to Isaiah as he carried out his ministry

temple. Probably the heavenly temple, with which the earthly temple was closely associated. John’s vision of God on his throne is similar (Rev 4:1–8). (CSB)

Meant is the heavenly sanctuary, the place where God may be seen by angels and saints. This sanctuary is totally filled with the glory of the Almighty. (Stoeckhardt)

6:2 *Above.* Flanking the throne as an honor guard, much as the gold cherubim flanked the ark of the covenant. (TLSB)

seraphim. See v. 6; angelic beings not mentioned elsewhere. The Hebrew root underlying this word means “burn,” perhaps to indicate their purity as God’s ministers. (It refers to venomous snakes in 14:29; 30:6; see Nu 21:6.) They correspond to the “living creatures” of Rev 4:6–9, each of whom also had six wings. (CSB)

Hbr plural noun, occurring only here and in v 6 as a name for celestial beings. Hbr *saraph* suggests that they were glowing or fiery beings. Though their description is somewhat cryptic, the point of this vision is God’s glory, not the details of His attendants. (TLSB)

six wings – Two covered their faces, for even in their perfection the surpassing brilliance of God was overwhelming. With another two they cover their lower body in modesty. The last two are used to serve the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

6:3 *one called to another* – Now the service the seraphim are rendering is described in greater detail. Above all else, their service consists in this, that they extol and praise God. In two choirs the seraphim hover around the throne of God, and the two choirs not begin an antiphony. (Stoeckhardt)

Though God’s people today sing the words of this verse in the Divine Service, Isaiah does not necessarily indicate that the seraphim sang. (TLSB)

Holy, holy, holy. The repetition underscores God’s infinite holiness. Note the triple use of “the temple of the LORD” in Jer 7:4 to stress the people’s confidence in the security of Jerusalem because of the presence of that sanctuary. (CSB)

6:4 *thresholds... shook ... filled with smoke.* Similarly the power of God’s voice terrified the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and the mountain was covered with smoke (see Ex 19:18–19; 20:18–19). (CSB)

temple filled with smoke – According to the context, in which we are told about the song of praise of the seraphim and its mighty effect, we are to take this smoke as incense, as a symbol of worship. And since shortly before the discussion concerned the revelation of God’s glory on earth, meant by the incense are the prayers of the saints on earth. Cf. Rev 5:8; 8:3,4. Men on earth, who also observe the glory of God, unite their voices with the voices of the angels and together with the holy seraphim give to the three times Holy One praise, glory, and adoration. (Preface & Sanctus) (Stoeckhardt)

voice of him. The seraph. (TLSB)

6:5 *Woe.* Isaiah’s cry indicates that he is as good as dead. Ex 33:20 declares no one may see God and live. (TLSB)

I am lost - dawmaw – To be destroyed or obliterated. Isaiah recognizes the vast gulf between himself and God the Holy One. He is grievously aware of his sinful condition. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

for I am a man – There are two reasons for Isaiah’s distress. First, he knew that purity of speech is required for the worship of God, but his lips were impure. Second, Isaiah recognized that he belonged to same people who were corrupt to whom he was to minister. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Ceremonial impurity. Impure people were barred from the temple (cf Ps 15). (TLSB)

tamē’, an adjective meaning “unclean,” that is, ritually and ceremonially impure, defiled. It is the opposite of *qadush* (“holy”) of v 3 and falls into the same semantic field as “sinful.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

yes have seen the King. Isaiah was dismayed because anyone who saw God expected to die immediately. (CSB)

Isaiah feared because his eyes had seen the Lord, and he knew that no one can see God and live (Exodus 33:20). But God has chosen to reveal Himself to the prophet. The vision is for the benefit of Isaiah, for the benefit of ministry, and for us. God grants the vision to this sinful man by undeserved love. He will not die, but will live. (PBC)

For that reason, he says, “I am lost.” But it turned out for the salvation of the prophet that he was thus thrust down to hell, so that he might be led away and lead others away from that uncleanness of the Law to the purity of Christ, so that He alone might reign. (Luther)

6:6 *seraphim flew to me* – Here now a resurrection from the dead takes place. We see that sinners who acknowledge their sins are not abandoned. The prophet cries out that he is lost, that he is oppressed with the consciousness of a defiled mouth, and that he has felt sin and death. And on that account he obtained forgiveness. “If we confess our sins, etc.” says 1 John 1:9; and 1 John 2:1 says: “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father”; so also 1 John 5:18. God hates the sin of hardening and its being defended. Let them be cleansed and let them confess their uncleanness, especially that of the mouth. For where lips and doctrine are unclean, there unclean works follow. Therefore the seraph approaches to set the prophet free from his sin. But he uses means. So, then, two things are set forth to the prophet, namely, Word and sign. The Lord often acts this way. The lips are cleansed by fire. This is the sign. The Word is: “Your guilt be taken away.” Here our sacraments are established. Yet these are disdained and shamefully handled by some who say: Nothing external benefits the soul.⁴ But let them criticize as much as they want. What Isaiah experiences here is not a fairy tale, but as there are fearful and serious voices, so there is also absolution, which then is granted through the addition of the sign to the Word. Now, what that sign could do, this our Baptism can also do. (Luther)

burning coal. Coals of fire were taken inside the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:12), when sacrifice was made to atone for sin. (CSB)

Fire from the altar of incense. (TLSB)

tongs - meləqachayim. This word has the dual ending, indicating something in a pair, or doubled. It is a noun derived from the verb *laqach*, “to take.” Together, we have “double taker things,” an apt description of a pair of tongs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Needed to arrange the burning coals. (TLSB)

altar. The altar of incense in the Holy Place. The context could imply that Isaiah was a priest serving in the temple. While there was an altar for burning incense in the temple, Isaiah likely saw a vision of heaven. (Cf Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30 for possible references to a tabernacle in heaven; early Jewish and Christian tradition noted these texts.) The angel would get this burning coal from the altar in heaven. This image reinforces the truth that God’s people in the earthly temple were in God’s presence, but God was not confined to a building. Rather, He promised to meet them in the temple. (TLSB)

6:7 *touched your lips.* When God commissioned Jeremiah, his hand touched the prophet’s mouth (Jer 1:9). (CSB)

Only when God has forgiven Isaiah will he be able and ready to proclaim God’s Holy Word. This holiness is not from Isaiah’s own works but is God’s gracious gift; Holy Communion is also God’s gracious gift. John of Damascus: “Let us apply our eyes and lips and brows and partake of the divine coal. ... Isaiah saw the coal. But coal is not plain wood but wood united with fire; in like manner also the bread of the communion is not plain bread but bread united with divinity” (*NPNF* 2 9:83). (TLSB)

sin atoned for – This action may have reminded Isaiah of the Day of Atonement, when coals of fire from the altar of sacrifice were brought into the Most Holy Place so that the ministering priest would not die but be able to sprinkle the atoning blood (Lev. 16:12-16) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Isaiah's Commission from the Lord

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

6:8–10 Isaiah’s prophetic commission will have the ironic but justly deserved effect of hardening the callous hearts of rebellious Israel—and so rendering the warnings of judgment sure (see vv. 11–13). See also Jer 1:8, 19; Eze 2:3–4.

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 14:12-20

12 So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. 13 Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

14:12 *eager for manifestations of the Spirit*. Lit, “zealots of the spirits.” Some manuscripts have “zealots of the spiritual gifts,” which probably gives the sense. However, cf Is 11:2; Rv 1:4. (TLSB)

excel in building up the church. The basic principle of ch. 14. (CSB)

perisseuate – To be rich in or have an abundance of, or abound in. This also reminds us that we will not be perfect in this and that we need to keep on growing by being in the Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

14:13 *power to interpret* – *diermeveuo* – To translate from human language to another. The theme of this whole section is that what gifts we have are useful for the whole body. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

Lit, “pray so that he may interpret.” Interpretation was a spiritual activity that should follow speaking in a tongue. (TLSB)

14:14 *mind is unfruitful*. † When a person speaks in tongues or prays in tongues, the human mind does not produce the language and is not involved. (CSB)

Ritual language is known for its conservative tendencies. E.g., we still pray “Our Father,” quote Bible passages, or sing hymns and liturgy in seventeenth-century English (KJV); immigrant communities

typically use their heritage language and their new language alongside each other in worship settings, even when the meaning of their heritage language is being lost (linguists refer to this as “language shift”). Records of ritual conservatism, multiple languages in worship, and the confusion they caused are known from the Jerusalem temple and from Palestinian Judaism (Sotah 7:1–2; Megillah 2:1). Paul gives evidence of ritually conservative language at Corinth as well. (TLSB)

If the person’s mind is in neutral – not engaged with his spirit – he is unable to communicate that spiritual utterance in meaningful terms in the language(s) known by the listeners. (CC p. 485)

14:15–17 *pray ... sing ... praising God ... say “Amen”... thanksgiving.* Elements employed in OT (1Ch 16:36; Ne 5:13; 8:6; Ps 104:33; 136:1; 148:1) and NT worship (Ro 11:36; Eph 5:18–20). “Amen,” meaning “It is true” or “So be it,” is the believer’s confession of agreement with the words spoken (cf. Gal 1:5). Thus it is important that a message in tongues be interpreted. (CSB)

14:15 *pray with my spirit ... with my mind ... sing with my spirit ... with my mind.* May mean that Paul will sometimes pray or sing with his spirit in a tongue; at other times he will pray or sing with his mind in his own language. Others believe that Paul was declaring his intention to pray or sing with both mind and spirit at the same time. (CSB)

14:16 *give thanks ... thanksgiving.* Different Gk terms: *eulogeo*, “to praise,” “bless” God in prayer (as in Eng “eulogy”); *eucharistia*, “gratitude,” “a prayer of thanksgiving” (as in Eng “Eucharist”). Paul may have in mind specific liturgical prayers, such as the Eighteen Benedictions that were used in first-century Jewish synagogues. (TLSB)

he does not know – idiotai – Uninstructed. We would call them the catechumens. They participated in the worship service but if they did not understand then they would not be instructed. Paul reminds us that the prime concern of worship is to proclaim clearly the Good News of Jesus Christ. Everyone, including children and visitors should be able to understand what is done during the worship service. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

Commonly, a person who was not an expert. Here, a layperson or someone new to the church is likely meant. In v 23 “outsider” is paired with “unbeliever.” (TLSB)

say “Amen.” Proper liturgical response to prayer in synagogue and church. John Chrysostom: “If you shall bless in a barbarian tongue, not knowing what you say, nor able to interpret, the layman cannot respond the Amen. For not hearing the words, ‘forever and ever,’ which are at the end [of a prayer], he does not say the Amen” (TLSB)

14:17 *being built up* – oikodomeitai – It is from the same root as “built up” in verse 12. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

14:18 *I speak in tongues more than all of you* – Paul clarifies in this verse that he is not protesting this misuse of tongues from a sense of sour grapes. Rather, Paul is thankful to God for enriching him with this gift beyond anyone else in Corinth. (CC p. 486)

Paul boasted rhetorically to show the Corinthians that the activity they valued so highly was common. John Chrysostom: “This he does also in another place intending, namely, to take away the advantages of Judaism and to show that henceforth they are nothing, he begins by declaring that [he] himself had been endowed with them” (*NPNF* 1 12:211). Cf 2Co 11:21–23. (TLSB)

14:19 *But in the church.*† Some believe that an interpretation is unnecessary when the gift of tongues is being used as a private prayer language. They base such a distinction on v. 18 (see v. 14) when compared with the phrase quoted here. Others think Paul is very forcefully emphasizing the importance of understanding the message spoken in church, rather than making a distinction between public and private. (CSB)

five words with my mind. More rhetoric, emphasizing the need for meaningful communication. “Not only has Paul commanded that a language understood by the people be used in church (1 Corinthians 14:2, 9), but human law has also commanded it” (AC XXIV 4). (TLSB)

4:20 Before presenting one final argument regarding the comparative superiority of prophecy over tongues, Paul pauses for a moment and appeals to his “brothers” (14:20) to take a more mature approach. To be concerned for the edification of Christ’s body is a mark of mature thinking. But to be concerned with vain and competitive displays of one’s spiritual prowess through tongues-speaking, with no thought for the effect on fellow believers, is a mark of childishness. Paul wants the Corinthians to press on to the maturity of Christian thought which characterizes the veteran of the cross (see 2:6; 3:1–3). At the same time, they should have the innocence of children as far as wickedness is concerned (cf. Rom 16:19). They should not be experienced in the wickedness which plagued the city and constantly tempted the church (cf. 1 Cor 5:8; 10:6; and Paul’s final appeal in 15:32–34). (CC)

be infants in evil. Just as in the case of infants, have no evil desires or wrong motives in wanting to excel in spiritual gifts (such as speaking in tongues) as an end in itself. (CSB)

A proverbial saying. Paul did not suggest that infants are innocent of sin (Rm 3:23; 5:12). Augustine: “In the weakness of the infant’s limbs, and not in its will, lies its innocency” (*NPNF* 1 1:48). (TLSB)

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GOSPEL – Luke 5:1-11

The Calling of the First Disciples

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 signaled 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.

Up to this point Luke has pictured Jesus as going it alone in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. He seems to have no companions as He makes His way through the synagogues. If we had only the Gospel of Mark, the call of the first disciples would appear to be something “out of the blue” (Mark 1:16-20). But by reading the Gospels of Luke and John we realize that Jesus and the first disciples were rather well acquainted even before their call to follow. In the previous section we heard how Jesus had gone to the home of Simon and healed His mother-in-law. When now He makes use of Simon’s boat, it does not seem at all strange. Simon was simply returning a favor. (PBC)

5:1 *one occasion* – This passage must be seen in view of 4:43, which immediately precedes it, i.e., that Jesus’ teaching in the boat and the miraculous catch of fish are part of Jesus’ necessity to “proclaim as Good News the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I was sent.” Although Peter appeared briefly in connection with the healing of his mother-in-law, this is the first passage in Luke’s gospel where Jesus interacts with his future disciples. Peter will now respond to Jesus’ pattern of teaching and performing miracles and will enter into the kingdom of God and its preaching when Jesus calls him to be a “catcher of men alive.” (CC)

Lake of Gennesaret. Luke is the only one who calls it a lake. The other Gospel writers call it the Sea of Galilee, and John twice calls it the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 6:1; 21:1). (CSB)

Usually called the Sea of Galilee; also called the Sea of Tiberias. (TLSB)

παρὰ τὴν λίμνην Γεννησαρέτ—The lake Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee. Luke’s geography is very accurate, for Jesus moves easily from Capernaum to the shores of Galilee. (CC)

crowd was pressing in on him – It was impossible for Him to avoid the crowds that gathered whenever His presence was announced by some one that saw Him. Here a multitude pressed upon Him, whose eagerness for the Word of God is mentioned. (Kretzmann)

to hear – ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ—In the early Christian church, a technical term for a catechumen was a “hearer of the Word.” Hippolytus’ Apostolic Tradition from around A.D. 215 offers an example (G. J. Cuming, *Hippolytus: A Text for Students* [Bramcote, England: Grove, 1976] 17): “And when those who are to receive baptism are chosen, let their life be examined. . . . Have they done every kind of good work? And when those who brought them bear witness to each: ‘He has’, let them hear the gospel.” One who “hears the gospel” (a technical term) was a catechumen, who, after three years of instruction, was enrolled in the final stage of catechesis before Baptism. (CC)

Certainly the highly structured catechetical regimen described by Hippolytus and other early church fathers was developed after Luke’s time. However, Luke’s gospel itself offers clues about the beginnings of such catechetical procedures and terminology. Those who were Jesus’ original “hearers” or who were “hearing” or “listening to the word(s)” of Jesus could be called “hearers,” “learners,” “students,” “disciples,” or even “catechumens,” and the NT bears witness to the start of formal catechesis already in the NT era; see comments on κατηχήθης, “catechized,” in Lk 1:4. In fact, μαθητής, “disciple,” denotes one who regularly listens to, learns from, and follows a teacher or rabbi. “To hear,” ἀκούω, is used in the Sermon on the Plain and marks its catechetical nature (6:27, 47, 49). In other significant places “hearer(s)” of Jesus’ words or those who come “to hear” may be those in the initial stage of becoming disciples or catechumens. (CC)

Luke contains nine references to “hearing” Jesus’ “word(s)” (ἀκούω and λόγος): 5:1, 15; 6:47; 8:12, 13, 15, 21; 10:39; 11:28. Particularly in the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus will stress that it is not enough merely to “hear” his Word; one must hear and also “do” it (ποιέω, 6:47, 49; 8:21) or “keep” it (φυλάσσω, 11:28; also Jn 12:47). Cf. Mary “keeping” or “treasuring” words about Jesus (ῥηίμα and compounds of τηρέω) in Lk 2:19, 51 and the Johannine theme of “keeping” Jesus’ “Word” (τηρέω and λόγος in Jn 8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20; 17:6). (CC)

An important part of the background of NT and early church language about “hearing” Jesus’ Word is found in the Torah, and in particular in Deuteronomy, where the verb שָׁמַע occurs some ninety-two times, usually denoting the hearing of God’s words by the Israelites. But the verb does not simply mean “to hear.” *Most of the time it means “to hear in faith,” and therefore “to believe and to put into practice.”* Typical is the thought of Deut 4:1: “And now, O Israel, *hear* the statutes and statements of justice that I am teaching you *to do so that you may live.*” As with Jesus in the NT, it is not the mere hearing of the Word that effects salvation, but *hearing in faith—faith that is created in the heart by that same Word of God, faith that is active in works, and faith by which one inherits the promises in the Word.* Noteworthy in this regard is Deut 6:4: “*Hear*, O Israel, Yahweh your God, Yahweh is one,” which really means, “*Believe*, O Israel, that Yahweh your God is one.” “To hear” means “to believe.” The Gospel import of “to hear” is reinforced by Deut 11:13–15, 18–25, where as a result of hearing, the Israelites love Yahweh and receive the blessings of his grace. (CC pp. 203,204)

the word of God – τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ—The Word of God is a Lukan expression for the preaching of Jesus and the apostles, i.e., the Gospel. The genitive τοῦ θεοῦ is subjective, i.e., the Word is *from* God and is *God’s* Word (rather than just being “about God”). (CC p 204)

5:2 *washing their nets.* After each period of fishing, the nets were washed, stretched and prepared for use again. (CSB)

Regular task for fishermen such as Peter, Andrew, James, and John. (TLSB)

The nets were usually washed after a catch of fish, so it is surprising that the disciples would be washing the nets if they had not caught any fish. “Net” is used four times here, and only in this pericope in Luke. It is the boundary between being loose in the water or being caught and in the boat. As one is brought from one status to another, i.e., from being loose to being caught, the transition is effected by a miracle that testifies to God’s presence. In this case, the miracle is that the nets that could find no fish now find an overabundance of fish *because of the word of Jesus*. The nets are being cleaned, even though they have not been dirtied by fish, so that they might be ready to serve as the vehicle for God’s miraculous work in his new creation. The nets are the means by which one is brought into the church. The nets are put into the water at Jesus’ word. Thus Luke configures his opening to the passage with references to the preaching of Jesus (5:1, 3). Entrance into the boat where Jesus is present must be through the nets, the preaching of the kingdom of God. The pericope is about “catching men alive”—through the ministry of the means of grace. This is what establishes the church. (CC p. 207)

boats – The first word of this sort is “boats” (πλοῖα). Note the movement of Jesus with respect to the boats: Jesus sees the boats (5:2), goes down into a boat (5:3), and uses the boat for teaching (5:3). The boats receive the great catch of fish (5:7), and then are left behind when Peter, James, and John follow Jesus (5:11). Momentarily, the boat becomes the place where Christ proclaims the kingdom and where the miraculous results of his teaching are contained. Compare Noah, who was saved through a boat as a type of Holy Baptism (1 Pet 3:20–21). Because Christ is present in the boat, it becomes a symbol of the church, where Christ’s teaching and miracles take place and where believers are gathered. Luther sees it this way when he says: “It is our comfort, however, that Christ, through our preaching, will lead his own into the boat.” The church also had this in mind when it named the part of the sanctuary called the “nave”—Latin for “boat” or “ship.” (CC)

5:3 *which was Simon’s* – The miracle itself is structured around the dialog between Simon Peter and Jesus. Peter had been introduced into the narrative at the healing of his mother-in-law (4:38) but was incidental to the story. In the miraculous catch of fish, Peter is a central figure (5:3, 4, 5, 8, 10). This is the story of his call by Jesus. It is not without significance that it is Peter’s boat into which Jesus enters in order to teach. Peter is from the beginning of the gospel first among the Twelve. (CC)

put out a little from the land. Allowed Jesus some freedom from the press of the crowd, which made Him easier to see and to hear. (TLSB)

sat down. The usual position for teaching. The boat provided an ideal arrangement, removed from the press of the crowd but near enough to be seen and heard. (CSB)

taught the people – ἐδίδασκεν—Jesus’ teaching on the boat continues his pattern of proclamation and miracles. This teaching must have had as significant an impact on Peter as the miracle. Luther rightly accents the impact of the sermon on Peter: “Peter is to become a different man; and a greater miracle is to

be wrought in him than in the draught of fishes. The sermon which Christ had previously preached from the boat now first began to have its effect upon him” (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John N. Lenker, trans. J. Lenker et al., vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983] 156). (CC p. 204)

5:4 *into the deep* – Jesus asks Peter to do something that defies all human logic: after a long night of fishing without success to go back out into the deep and let down his nets to fish. In the OT, the depths of the sea have the connotations of chaos, evil and death. (CC p. 208)

5:5 *master* – This is title unique to Luke. It means “chief,” “commander.” An address of respect. Later, Peter will acclaim Jesus with more exalted titles, such as “Lord” (v. 8) and “the Christ of God” (9:20). (TLSB)

toiled all night – Night fishing often yields good results. On this night, however, they had no success. (TLSB)

because you say so – Peter moves into this dark unknown at the word of Jesus. His subsequent following of Jesus “on a path unknown is therefore a logical progression for one who had already ‘put out into the deep’ on the basis of a word only.” Peter has been struck by Jesus’ teaching from the boat about the kingdom and therefore lowers his nets at Jesus’ word. (CC p. 208)

5:6 *large number of fish* – The word of Jesus creates the great catch of fish. Contrary to Peter’s expectation, Jesus shows him that fish are in abundance – in places where one least expects. Here Jesus’ action as the Creator overcomes Peter’s doubt. As in the feeding of the five thousand, when the Creator comes to his creation to recreate, there is always abundance. The abundance of fish is a foretaste of the success of the Gospel mission. Even though the nets appear ready to break, they remain firm and accomplish the task of bringing the fish into the boat, as will the proclamation of the Gospel. (CC)

Likely the comb, or musht, fish, the only large fish in Galilee that moves in shoals. Some 30 varieties of fish now live in the lake. (TLSB)

5:7 *their partners*. Four of Jesus most important apostles were two pairs of brothers: Simon Peter and Andrew; and James and John (sons of Zebedee). They may have run a sizable fishing business. (TLSB)

5:8 *Simon Peter* – Σίμων Πέτρος—By giving Peter’s two names here in the context of his call by Jesus, the evangelist follows Matthew (4:18) and emphasizes Peter’s place of leadership among the twelve apostles. He is “the rock.” (CC)

depart from me. The nearer one comes to God, the more he feels his own sinfulness and unworthiness—as did Abraham (Ge 18:27), Job (42:6) and Isaiah (6:5). (CSB)

5:10 *do not be afraid* – With Jesus at our side there is nothing to fear when we go about doing his work.

Jesus’ response is His word of absolution to Peter. The miracle of bringing fish into the boat is the miracle of making the unworthy sinner fit to stay in the presence of the holy God. It is the miracle of the forgiveness of sins (cf. Isaiah’ similar reaction and the absolution that enabled him to serve as a prophet

[Is 6:1-8]). The miracle of forgiveness will be celebrated in the next three passages of this section. (CC p. 209)

catching men – Jesus says, “From now on you will be catching men alive.”

Not only does Christ give comfort to poor, terror-stricken Peter by the kindly words in which he declares and offers to him his grace and absolution, but he goes on to strengthen this comfort by the great promise that he will give him something far beyond anything he has hitherto received from him. ... “From henceforth,” Christ says, “thou shalt catch men.” That Peter is not to be alarmed on account of his unworthiness and sins is, in itself, an abundant comfort and grace. However, he is not only to have the forgiveness of his sins, but is also to know that God intends to accomplish still greater things through him by making him a help and comfort to others.

In Peter’s call there is both absolution and a commission to extend that absolution to others (see comments at 22:28–30). (CC)

5:11 *left everything and followed him*. This was not the first time these men had been with Jesus (see Jn 1:40–42; 2:1–2). Their periodic and loose association now became a closely knit fellowship as they followed the Master. The scene is the same as Mt 4:18–22 and Mk 1:16–20, but the accounts relate events from different hours of the morning. (CSB)