

***“Catching People”***  
**A Sermon Outline by Rev. Tom Cramer**  
**based on Luke 5.1-11**  
**Preached on February 5, 2006**  
**by Rev. Steve Yamaguchi**  
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## **Luke 5.1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’ <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’ <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’ <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

### **I. Fishing with Others vs. Fishing Alone**

The type of fishing in Luke 5:1-11 is net-fishing, not line-fishing. It is fishing in community with others rather than fishing alone.

### **II. Fishing with Others**

Illustration – Steve’s call to Grace Presbyterian Church in Paramount called him to a presbytery of 22,000 members and 58 churches, not just to a single congregation.

In 1988, when Steve was finishing his post-graduate work at Princeton Seminary, he could have taken his pick of churches (ask pastor Tom why), but he and his wife, Alison, asked God to send them anywhere in the world God would have them go.

Steve and Alison were called to a gang-ridden neighborhood in Paramount, to a dilapidated church with gum smashed into the sanctuary carpet, food on the walls of the one Sunday school room, covers torn off the Bibles and hymnbooks. The congregation of 25 members hadn't celebrated a baptism in so many years they had forgotten where they stored the baptismal font.

It would have been easy for Steve to feel all alone in the world, serving a small, discouraged church, BUT he and his church gained GREAT encouragement from other churches in the presbytery who heard about Grace's efforts to proclaim the gospel in Paramount:

- Lakewood First Presbyterian Church in Long Beach gave them about 100 hymnals and Bibles.
- Trinity Presbyterian Church in Santa Ana pledged \$500,000 from their capital campaign to help Grace move to a new facility at a new location.
  - By the time the money actually became available, Steve had to write the strangest letter of his life, *“As Grace Paramount is doing so well, please kindly re-direct your gift of \$500,000 to another project in need.”*
- When Grace barely had 3 students in their youth group, Geneva Presbyterian's youth group visited them with a full program of worship and games, giving them a taste of what their youth group could become.
  - One of the students at Grace went on to become a worship leader and now leads worship at Bel Air Presbyterian.
- After six years of ministering at Grace Paramount, the congregation celebrated 23 baptisms on Easter day, 16 of them adult baptisms.

### III. Jesus is our Guide

Illustration—Steve’s wife, Alison, hired a guide to take Steve fly-fishing. It seemed like the guide owned the fish in the river he was so knowledgeable about where to throw the fishing line. It was as if he could see under the water. Like trusting an expert guide, we can trust Jesus to guide us as we fish for people together. The master knows where the fish are. It requires discernment to catch the fish.

Luke 5:5 says, “*Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’*” Steve likes the King James Version rendering of verse 5b better, “*Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*”

Doing mission and ministry requires first waiting on the word of Jesus. Steve’s congregation became radically dependent on Jesus to be their guide.

God’s word is worthy of our trust.

### IV. Communal Fishing on a Grand Scale

Joining Hearts & Hands Mission Initiative of the PC (USA) is a \$40 million capital campaign to renew the church for mission. Nationally, the campaign will raise \$20 million for domestic church planting and redevelopment and \$20 million for new international mission projects.

Los Ranchos Presbytery took a step of faith: pledged \$3.5 million to support church plants in our own presbytery, \$1 million to support international mission efforts and projects.

The Trinity Presbyterian Church has redirected some of the \$500,000 first planned for Grace to the Joining Hearts and Hands Campaign.

### V. Catching People for Life

Steve noted all the different Greek words that the gospel writer Luke uses for “catching” fish:

- to “receive” the fish
- another word is like the verb “to call” the fish to them

- the final word means “to rescue” people

The final Greek word Luke uses for “catching” in the phrase, **“from now on you will be catching people,”** is the Greek verb *zoegrum*, from which we get the English word “zoology.”

It means “live catching.” It signifies “catching alive,” rather catching in a way that injures or kills. It’s not predation; it’s rescuing, and there’s a difference. It means “to rescue” in the same way that a school of fish, should they be trapped in a mud side-pool of a lake, can be rescued and placed back into the main body of the lake. They may feel like they are in danger WHILE they are being caught, but in fact they are being rescued.

This is very much like what Paul talks about in Colossians (1:13-14), that: **“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

That’s the work that Jesus is calling Peter to in Luke 5 and it’s the work that we’re called to do as well. To go and capture live and rescue those who are lost in the kingdom of darkness so that we may help transfer them into the kingdom of his beloved son.

## VI. Fishing Together

The type of fishing that is done in this passage is fishing together, it is the plural form of fishing. That’s what Joining Hearts and Hands is about, letting out the nets together, drawing them in together.

Even beyond Joining Hearts and Hands, the reality is that you are not alone at Geneva. The little church in Paramount was not alone, because we are disciples all together in the one body of Christ, who gives us the command, **“You ALL drop down the nets.”** Maybe Peter will push out the boat somewhere but **“You ALL draw the nets in,”** so that we might rescue from deadly waters those who are perishing under the power of darkness so that we might introduce them to Christ and transfer them to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

**CONCLUSION:** We draw in our nets together and catch people for a new life in Christ.