

## The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 5:1-11

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him (KJV)

The present Gospel is proclaimed in God's Holy Church every year for the benefit of the whole world. The Gospel confirms and verifies the value of listening to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Gospel is resolutely and fervently proclaimed in the Church through the centuries. The Gospel proclaims the preserved and known teachings and life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Attentive listeners take the Gospel to heart. Their lives are enriched and transformed. The present Gospel is an example of the Apostle Peter listening to Jesus' words and having his life transformed.

Peter and those with him had fished all night without success. When Peter and James and John who were with Peter listened to Jesus, an overwhelming abundance of fish were caught.

Peter, James and John immediately recognized the value of heeding to Jesus' words. Listening to Jesus reached into the depths of Peter, James and John's very beings. Peter, James and John changed their lives completely and followed Jesus.

Attentive listeners to the present Gospel learn the lesson to begin each undertaking in life by first turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for instruction and direction.

Jesus Christ is ever-present for believers to turn to in prayer for each undertaking in life. Jesus' teachings are readily available to believers in the Church. Jesus' teachings are present in the Holy Scriptures.

Explanations of Jesus' teachings are in the writings and teachings of the Holy Fathers and Mothers of the Church. The lives of the saints and martyrs describe the way to apply Jesus' teachings in daily life.

Wise and attentive believers make efforts daily to bring life into complete conformity with Jesus' teachings and expectations. When falling short and sinning, serious believers repent and try again.

The present Gospel reveals Jesus is willing to accept sinners choosing to heed His teachings and to follow Him. Peter identified himself as a sinner to Jesus in the present Gospel. Jesus did not reject Peter.

Jesus was clear in St. Mark's Gospel when He said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17) We are all sinners. Today's Gospel is for each of us.

When Peter, James and John saw the value of listening to Jesus, they fully embraced Jesus in their lives. They gave up their livelihood and families to follow Jesus Christ. The change was profound and complete.

Peter, James and John lives were renewed in Jesus Christ. They put their old ways behind them. They became fishers of men. Jesus Christ makes a profound and life-changing impact on each person choosing to fully heed His words.

The Gospel proclaimed in the Church is always timely and relevant. Jesus' words merit being followed today and every day. The Epistle to the Hebrews states: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Remaining a sinner and putting life and the soul in peril are not a necessity. Repentance and change are always possible. A full and abundant life in Jesus Christ is accessible to every person.

The life in Christ involves embracing Christ's teachings and following them. Jesus Christ is ever-present to guide, lead and strengthen the person in the journey. Jesus Christ nourishes the believer through the Gospel and His Body and Blood.

Christ enables the believer to begin anew through Holy Confession. Christ heals the broken in body and spirit through Holy Communion and Holy Unction. Jesus Christ protects the broken-hearted and the hurting from the world's cruelty.

The opportunity for a full and abundant life in Christ is possible for every person taking the Gospel to heart. Conscious decision-making to follow Christ is necessary for change to occur.

The fact that Peter was a sinner did not deter Jesus from making Peter a fisher of men. Jesus Christ has transformed the lives of sinners for centuries. Peter's willingness to listen to and follow Jesus was the deciding difference in his life.

Attentive listeners have their lives transformed when they heed Christ's words. Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (Jn.10:10) Today is the day to listen to Christ and follow Him.

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The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Euphrosyne. Venerable Father Sergius of Radonezh. September 25/October 8, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic