

Heaven to Earth

Luke 5 is an amazing account of one of the many miracles Jesus did.

But what was going on behind the scenes? On the surface, this was about catching some fish. But we live in a world that isn't just physical. If you've never thought about this before, it's important to know there is more to life than what we see and touch. God works in the spiritual atmosphere through the Holy Spirit. What happens in the spiritual atmosphere is then reflected in the physical world around us.

Jesus literally brought heaven to earth. He brought God's will on the earth through all that he did. As followers of Jesus, he now works on the inside of us to help us carry on this work of seeing heaven come on earth as it is in heaven.

In Matthew 5, Jesus gives his followers a model prayer to guide their prayers. One of the things he says is, 'Our Father in heaven, your name is holy. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' One day Jesus will return to earth and set up an actual kingdom on earth. Until then he's given the role to everyone who believes in him. We don't do this alone – we do it through the power of the Holy Spirit (God in us).

So how can we live a life where we see God use us to bring heaven to earth?

Here are seven points. There's too much for one talk so break it up into as many talks as works for you. As ever, add in your own insights and change or develop the content as long as it stays true to God's Word and God's character!

The Bible – Luke 5.1011

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

1. People do want to hear what Jesus says

In an article by [The Message Trust](#), Daniel from the band Brightline explains that young people do want to hear about Jesus. He says this: *"As time goes on I realise more and more that the gospel is effective. And young people do actually want to hear about Jesus. I think there's a misconception that they don't want to hear about God or faith but in reality, it's quite the opposite. They're longing for something more. Often when you present the gospel to them they respond with, 'Why have I never heard this before?' No one has told them that their life has purpose or that they are unique."*

Some people have set their hearts against God or have their own agendas. But many people need to hear the good news about Jesus because they need to hear this in a broken and hurting world. Jesus spoke the word of God and people listened. Yes there were the haters but there were those who gathered and followed to hear him.

We have a message on the inside of us of incredible hope. Jesus didn't come into the world to judge, criticise and point out people's faults. He came to release them into the fullest form of life and freedom that they could imagine. Jesus brings out the gold and the good on the inside of us and he wants to do the same for others.

Don't believe the lie that you should stay silent with the good news that's on the inside of you!

2. God uses us – what we have and who we are

Many times people say they don't believe there is a God because they ask, 'where is he?' They often point to all the suffering in the world. Funnily enough the suffering in the world is proof of the Bible because God lets us know that this is an evil world!

God could have come along and made us all robots. In the movie 'The Island' (like many other films!) the concept is of a world that is controlled and is about people who want to break free of this control. Now in a bad way this is what happened when Adam and Eve rejected God. But 'The Island' and films like it are proof that humanity was not designed to be controlled and dominated and abused. It is about people discovering who they are, breaking free of control and helping others find truth as well. Sounds a bit like what happens when Jesus sets us free! The freedom Jesus gives us is true freedom. What this world thinks is freedom (doing whatever you want) is actually like slavery.

God doesn't come along and control us. He is not the hateful tyrant that some people who hate God say he is. God gives us freedom but at the same time God wants to partner with us. We may often think we're nobody and have nothing. But that's a lie. It's not true. You are a somebody and you have something! One of the things the world needs most is real love. If you simply love people, you'll do more in the world than many 'big names'.

Whatever we have, God wants to use to bring heaven to earth and bring people life.

With Peter, he used Peter's boat. Back in the Old Testament, God worked through the rod that Moses had. God works through whoever we are and whatever we give to him. This is why the book of Hebrews tells us to be 'living sacrifices.' Unlike other religions and world systems, we are called to be and to give life to others. If you don't have it all together, the good news is that you're a great candidate for God to use. Just like Simon Peter! And don't worry, God does have it all together and he lives on the inside of you!

3. The boat was on top of the water

When I recently had a cold and virus I told someone that I was a bit 'under the weather'. When people are drunk or on drugs, the police sometimes describe them as being 'under the influence'. Other times when things aren't going well, people may say 'well, under the circumstances.' Or when there is a war and an army surrounds a city and attacks it, the city is described as being 'under siege' (same title as a bad old movie!) When children hide because they're afraid, sometimes they may go under the bed.

There is generally something negative about being described as being 'under' something. Thankfully the boat that Jesus got into wasn't under the water but was on the water. In Revelation (for example 13.1, 17.15), the 'seas or waters' refer to the world around us.

We could say that when Jesus got into the boat on the water that this points to the fact that Jesus is over and above the world and all that's going on in it. This isn't in an arrogant way or because he thinks he's so important! What we mean is simply that Jesus has things covered.

God is in charge. He knows what is going on and his plans are being worked out, even when it doesn't feel like that.

When Jesus got the net and told the disciples to throw it onto the water, the disciples caught a load of fish. This was symbolising that the disciples were going to see people come to know Jesus, 'catching' people not fish. It's important to know that Jesus doesn't really want people to be 'caught' like fish (stuck in a net or attached to a hook on a line!) God draws people to him through his goodness and kindness, he doesn't force people into a net against their will!

But when Jesus got the disciples to throw the net it was symbolic meaning that Jesus was giving the disciples his authority to do God's will on earth and see God's kingdom come on earth. It was proof that nothing we ever do for God is wasted (see Galatians 6.10). It showed that when we have Jesus in our lives (when we're in the 'boat' with Jesus), we can be people who God uses to bring heaven to earth. We can see people set free and be released into their destinies. And so can you!

4. Preparation and obedience

The net that Jesus asked Simon Peter to throw down into the lake was the net that Simon and his mates had been washing and probably checking over or repairing too. These weren't brand new nets that they'd bought off the internet with fake reviews! These were nets that were tried and tested – they'd no doubt been used before many times successfully.

There's a lesson for us about preparation. You may have a dream that God has put into your heart but in order to see that happen, you'll have to be patient, use wisdom, stay

faithful and allow God to work it out. Keep praying, keep reminding God of his promises but never try to force something in your own strength or way. God's way is so much better.

If God hasn't released you into something then it's not time. He knows better and knows you more than you do! Let God prepare you so that you're ready for when he says "now"!

Back in the Old Testament we come across Moses. He had a call on his life from God but sadly he got ahead of God and did things his own way by killing an Egyptian who was attacking an Israelite. But that wasn't God's plan. Moses had to wait 40 years before he saw God's plan happen. This is different from David who was told he was going to be King but waited years for this to happen. He even worked under the current King (called Saul) and did his time, learning no doubt. When David had chances to kill Saul, he still didn't do that. He waited for God's plan in God's time. Yes he messed up but God called him a man after God's own heart – someone who wanted to see God's Kingdom – a man wanting to see heaven on earth, God's way.

Simon also obeyed Jesus when Jesus told him to do something (throw in the net to the lake again), despite his own doubts. When God tells you to do something, we should do it, even when we don't understand or it seems weird or we've got real doubts. God won't ask us to do anything that is against his Word (the Bible) or his nature. But he does ask us to obey. Often it's for our own good as well as the good for others. For me it can be something as simple as phoning someone, taking a lead or musical equipment with me, messaging someone to ask something. When I don't do it, often it causes me hassle as well as other people. So I want to be someone who obeys God!

5. Jesus speaks generally and specifically

To see heaven come to earth we need to know God's general will and we need to know his specific will.

In Luke 5, Jesus spoke to the crowd teaching them the word of God. Then Jesus spoke Simon Peter and no doubt the disciples generally. Jesus also spoke to Simon specifically.

We know that when Jesus speaks, he does so in many ways and on many levels. Sometimes we can hear a speaker and something they say really seems to speak to us. Our friend next to us listening to the same talk can something else from the same talk or even from the same words. God's Holy Spirit takes the words that people speak from the Bible and God's insights to them and speaks to each of us in different ways.

We also know that the Bible tells us some things specifically and other things generally. So for example the Bible specifically says don't have sex with someone else's partner. Or the Bible more generally tells us to love God and love others – but how this works out in practice can be quite varied and unique.

Like in any relationship, God wants us to know his will generally but he also may speak to us really specifically. When I felt the time was right to move from my one church, I read Isaiah 52.11-12 where the Bible says, "Depart, go out from there..." and goes on to say God would go before me and would be my rear guard. I knew God was speaking to me clearly about moving to my current church. God spoke specifically.

If there's anything you need to hear from God about, ask him. Then keep reading the Bible, talking to God, talking to others and keep listening out. God will always answer in his way and time!

6. God's kingdom shows we need each other

I've heard many people say things like they don't go to church any more because they don't need it. Or sometimes people say they can't find a good church. I often wonder whether the problem isn't church but the person saying they can't find a good church (don't be that kind of person!) Sometimes people have been hurt by church. And this can be very painful. The good news is that God has given us a secret weapon called forgiveness. When we forgive people, we release them but mainly we release ourselves. Unforgiveness is like a poison that someone else gives you and you keep on drinking – hurting only you! Stop drinking it!

God's great idea for this world is the church. We are his hands and feet in the world. Yes, Jesus is appearing to people in their millions in dreams and visions around the world (including someone I know who came out of a life of paganism to follow God after he appeared to her). But the church is really God's hands and words of action and love here on the earth. And he loves to use us. He loves it when we work together and don't fight each other because that's what God's will is. God tells us and then helps us to live in unity. If you don't like the way other Christians do things, don't worry about it. Pray, ask God to help you and them. You are not the deputy Holy Spirit and God can sort things out way better than we think we can! So don't waste time writing blogs, uploading videos and criticising other Christians. Jesus is not glorified with this and imagine what this hostility looks like to the world looking on. It's wrong, end of.

In the book of John chapter 13 verses 34 and 35, Jesus said people would know him because of our love for each other. Want people to know Jesus? Stop the criticism and the back-biting and bitterness. Ask God to help you to love. Then see what God does!

We need each other in the church. A preacher called Derek Prince once said that when David chose the stones to throw at Goliath, he went down to the brook where the stones had rubbed against each other and were smooth. This is a picture of church life. When we work and love together, we knock off each other's edges and help each other. Matthew 18.19 talks about praying in agreement and the picture is of an orchestral symphony. If they all played their own notes whenever they felt like it, the music would not be beautiful. It would be a terrible noise!! The picture has for us is working the works of God that he calls us to do. Loving each other, speaking truth but putting others first, overlooking faults, seeing the good in people and lifting each other up. The world is full of critical and horrible words and actions. The church should be the exact opposite so people sit up and take notice. People will want to be part of a community that really loves each other!

In Luke 5, Simon needed the other guys with their boat to help them take in the catch of fish. Maybe this is a picture of what the church can expect when we work together – people coming to know Jesus in great numbers so we need each other!

7. What Jesus does reveals who he is

Jesus was not a magician or an entertainer. He didn't do what he did because he wanted fame or because he was pointing to himself like some self-obsessed celebrity on one of the

many Celeb TV programmes. No, Jesus acted and lived with purpose. In John 5.19 Jesus said he only did and said what his Father God in heaven did and said. The purpose of Jesus was to glorify God and point people back to God so they could climb out of their mess and have a message to help others.

Let's think about our lives. Do we do the things that God does? Is our life about making Jesus famous? Maybe parts of your life are like that but other parts are about you. That's OK as we're all on a journey but Jesus wants to help you get free of your selfishness in every area of life. God is always pointing out things in us that need challenging and changing (another good reason to be part of a church, even if it's not ideal).

Some people really want to get married and that's awesome because it was God's plan. But I think one description of marriage could be a place where God reveals your selfishness and helps you become less selfish. Ouch!

What Jesus did in Luke 5 revealed who he really was. The disciples didn't catch lots of fish because Jesus was an expert fisherman. They caught a load of fish because Jesus is God in the flesh. When we encounter Jesus, things should change. The natural becomes supernatural and the supernatural becomes natural. This is who God is. The one who takes the muck and cleans it up. The one who turns sadness into joy. The one who restores what is broken. The one who takes no fish and turns it into abundance of fish.

If you don't know Jesus, why not ask him to show himself to you today. Invite him to take control of your heart and life. Say you're sorry for all your mess. Ask him to take it away, to come into your life by his Holy Spirit and to fill you with all his good in exchange for you throwing away all your rubbish.

If you are a Christian, ask God to help you to point people to him even more than before. Who wants a fishing net when you can know the one who knows where all the fish are and how to get them!

This is what bringing heaven to earth looks like!