

EPIPHANY 3  
ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
LOGANVILLE, GA  
JANUARY 21, 2018

**HEAVENLY MINDED, PRESENTLY FAITHFUL**  
**(Luke 5:1-11)**

May God grant you His grace and peace by the knowledge of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Christian, while he is in this world, is a unique creature, almost to the point of being a living paradox. His hopes, his treasure, his longing are all focused on the life which is to come, yet, he is also the most grateful for the blessings of God for this life. His family, which is only for this life, is so dear to him that he will risk all for them. In his work, by which he provides earthly needs for himself and others, is a joy. His time, which he acknowledges to be nothing more than a fleeting moment, is a precious commodity to him so that he desires not to waste it away on trifles. Some of these qualities you may also find in an unbeliever, but the big difference is that the unbeliever may act in such ways because he sees this life as all that there is. The Christian, under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, does these things knowing that, as the hymn writer put it, heaven is his home.

In our text for today, we witness two miracles—one which has to do with fish, the other which has to do with the human heart and mind. Our text if found written in Luke 5:1-11:

*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.*

By the time of the event that we have presented to us in our text, Peter had known Jesus for more than a year. Yet, during that year, Peter continued in his occupation as a fisherman. We don't know what kind of fisherman Peter was prior to meeting Jesus and believing in Him, but we do know something about Peter after he became a believer. Our text tells us that Peter was a hard worker, working even through the night. It also tells us, that Peter was a faithful worker, tending to and washing the nets that he used in his occupation.

What's the big deal about that, some may wonder. Surely there were others who would have done the exact same thing even among the pagans. True enough! However, the point here is that Peter did such things even though he knew the Messiah to be on the scene. Though, through faith in Jesus, he had become an heir of heaven, yet he did not despise the meager and hard work which was his to do while on the earth. He was heavenly minded, but presently faithful.

There is an important lesson for us in this. The lesson is this: a Christian who is heavenly minded will not despise and neglect his earthly calling. Of course, prayer and bible study should not take a back seat to your work. It is equally true, however, that you should not neglect your work for the sake of prayer and bible study. Yes, we are all witnesses to Christ. That, however, doesn't mean that you should call in sick to work so you can go house to house trying to convert others. Rather, a Christian reveals his heavenly mindedness by the very fact that he is all the more diligent in his earthly calling.

When a heavenly minded Christian is employed by another, his employer can rely on him. Not only is a heavenly minded Christian one who delights to go to the house of the Lord, but also finds joy in his work inasmuch as it is useful to society and because God has ordained it as the primary means through which God provides for him, his family, and for those who are in need.

From time to time you may meet an individual who professes to be a Christian and uses his carefree ways as proof that he is a faithful Christian. He may quit his job and go off across the country like a lunatic with the thought, "God will provide for me." It can be a tempting attitude to follow. It seems to reveal a great level of trust in God and a more personal

relationship with Him. It would seem to be the very definition of heavenly mindedness: a carefree life with no worries and no responsibilities. In the end, it is only a temptation. When the Lord calls us into His kingdom, He does not call us out of the world, unless it is a last hour conversion. Rather, He calls us into His kingdom that we might glorify Him while we are in the world. What glorifies Him is when His people are faithful in their responsibilities, seeking the good of others, and providing for those who are in need.

Those who take that “care free” attitude will almost always point to the last couple of verses from our text to try and disprove this truth. They would say, “If Peter was doing what pleases the Lord, then why did the Lord call them to be fishers of men? Why did they leave everything and follow Him?” The answer, of course, is not so difficult. The Lord had given Peter and the other disciples a new occupation, that is, the occupation of preaching the Gospel.

In a sense, we can say that every Christian is a fisher of men. Everyone of us, inasmuch as we are citizens of Christ’s heavenly kingdom, are priests of God. We have each been entrusted with the keys to the kingdom of heaven and are called upon to proclaim the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Yet, the Lord, in His grace and wisdom, has also established a means for His people to be edified and encouraged in that calling. That means is the public ministry. Yet, not every Christian is called into that vocation. Peter and the other disciples were called into that vocation by God. As they had been faithful in their previous vocations, so now they were faithfully approaching their new vocation.

The point is that what the disciples did does not disprove that heavenly minded Christians ought to be presently faithful Christians, but further emphasizes it. They weren’t going out to live the “care free” life. They were doing what Christ commanded them to do. They were heavenly minded and so they were presently faithful.

This is what Christ calls on each of you to do as well—to be faithful in your vocation. To be a heavenly minded Christian that seeks to glorify your Lord Jesus and your God in the responsibilities that you have. He wants you to consider the vocation in which He has placed you as a good work that He has prepared beforehand for you to walk in. He wants you not to despise your vocation—be it farmer, rancher, teacher, student, homemaker, banker, health care provider, or janitor—as an opportunity for you to do His good pleasure.

And notice, here, too, that the Lord blessed Peter and the others in their faithfulness. When, at His command, they went out into the deep and let down their nets, the catch was so big that two boats began to sink. This was a miracle, to be sure, but are any of your meals any less of a miracle? Is the good that the Lord gives you and others through your vocation any less of a miracle than this? I'm not saying that we should be faithful in our vocations out of the hope for personal, materialistic gain. That's being neither faithful nor heavenly minded. However, we can and should be confident that the Lord will provide for us, even when it would seem that to faithfully perform our vocation will be a hardship.

I mentioned at the outset that there are two miracles in this sermon. The first is the great catch of fish, as this account is commonly known. The greater miracle, of course, is the miracle that was worked in Peter's heart and in the heart of the other disciples who did leave all and follow Jesus. After the catch of fish, Peter falls down at Jesus' knees and cries, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

These words give us the key to the mystery of the heavenly mind of the Christian. Peter's heavenly mind was founded on the deep and terrifying knowledge of his fallen nature and of the great grace and mercy of Christ. For if by God's grace a man learns that he is earthly minded and could never please God or enter heaven in this condition, he can only fall before Jesus and plead for mercy. Here is the second and greater miracle—that Peter, a sinner whose heart and mind were, according to his fallen nature, focused on earthly matters, was granted a new spirit which made him heavenly minded and at the same time, presently faithful. By the Holy Spirit working in him a knowledge of his sinfulness and then to place his trust in Jesus for forgiveness, Peter became a new man, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Not only was his eternal abode now in heaven, his earthly pilgrimage became filled with opportunity to glorify his God. Such is the miracle of grace. Such is the miracle of the love of God toward us in Christ.

With this new, heavenly mind, let us not only rejoice to hear it proclaimed, but also rejoice to live in it, that whatever we do, whether in word or in deed, we might do all to the glory of God. Our treasure is in heaven and so our minds are there too. Yet, our God appointed work is before us here, so may we also be found presently faithful in that work which He has given to us to perform. May God grant each one of us such a heavenly mind, and some day through the grace of Jesus the glory of heaven itself. AMEN!