

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - February 10, 2022

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Title: "When You Feel Like Complaining"

Subtitle: "The Empty-Net Syndrome"

Scripture Reference: Luke 5:1-5

"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."

I. Introduction

A. Simon Peter had become a victim of the Empty-Net Syndrome. The Empty-Net Syndrome occurs when the last child leaves home, the parents are left alone, and the "nest" is empty.

B. The Empty-Net Syndrome occurs when you have fished all night long on the Sea of Galilee (referred to in Luke 5:1 as the Lake of Gennesaret, and the Sea of Tiberius in John 21:1), and returned to the dock with empty nets.

C. Simon had worked hard that night, but he had nothing to show for it. No fish in his net meant no money in his pocket. Although he wouldn't admit it, he may have been angry with God. After all, shouldn't God have caused the fish to be there to catch? Isn't he supposed to reward patience and hard work? So, how do you explain the empty nets?

D. What Simon Peter failed to realize was that God had purposely kept the fish from entering the nets that night. God had divinely ordained empty nets in order to accomplish a much greater purpose in Peter's life.

E. If the nets had been full after that night of fishing, the course of history might have been changed.

II. Exposition [Part I]

A. How could an apparent failure on Peter's part, possibly be in God's will? Let's think about what would have happened if their nets had been full instead of empty. If they had netted a huge catch that night:

- They would have missed meeting Jesus the next morning. They would have been too busy unloading their fish to take to the marketplace.
- Their boats would not have been available for Jesus to preach from. There were multitudes of people on the shore and there is no telling how many lives were changed who heard Jesus speak that day.
- There would have been no need to have the miracle Jesus performed. It might have been said by Peter or one of those fishing with him, "We already caught fish, Jesus. We don't need you to provide for us."
- Peter might have continued to fish for fish instead of fishing for men.

B. It clearly was God's will for them not to catch any fish that night. God has plans for our empty-net days and nights too.

C. We may not understand why we have not been successful in

some areas of our lives at this point along the journey. We may not be able to see any good reason for it. We may not have heard a voice from heaven to explain why our work has not been rewarded.

D. So, how are we to view things? Will we see them as being God's will? Or are we going to complain about not getting our catch?

E. God may be testing us on empty net days to see how we will respond. Even so, keep in mind that our Omniscient (i.e., all-knowing) God, already knows how we will respond. The test is so that we can discover and experience how we will respond.

F. We can choose to either be an *optimist* or a *pessimist*. Let's suppose an optimist and a pessimist were helping Simon Peter the night of their empty nets.

Comment: Keep this in mind; both the optimist and the pessimist can view the same situation but have a different response.

G. Let's take a look at the odd couple in action after the nets came up empty. Which one can you identify more closely with?

III. Exposition [Part II] - The Odd Couple in Action

- The **pessimist** says: "We wasted the night because we didn't catch anything."
- The **optimist** says: "God had a reason why we didn't catch anything."

A. When the nets come in empty, we wonder why? We need to realize that God has reasons that may not be obvious at the time.

B. Charles Francis Adams, Abraham Lincoln's Ambassador to Great Britain kept a diary during his lifetime. One day he wrote, "Went fishing with my son. A day wasted."

C. His son Brooks Adams also kept a diary. His note concerning the same day when he was eight years old said, "Went fishing with my father; the most glorious day of my life!"

D. Through the next forty years Brooks made constant reference

in his diary concerning that special day and the influence it had on him.

E. So, was it a wasted day? They made no reference to how many fish they caught. God's purpose for that day was not to catch fish, but for a father to spend time with his son. The father had missed it. He didn't seize the opportunity of the moment. He couldn't see what God had planned for that day.

A Question and a Comment for you to consider:

- When you have an empty net, do you look for God's purpose?
- Sometimes there is a divine purpose for the things that don't happen.

IV. Exposition [Part III]

- The **pessimist** says: "The fish aren't out there. It won't do any good."
- The **optimist** says: "I will trust and obey, though I don't understand."

"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."
(Luke 5:4)

A. These fishermen were exhausted and ready to go home and sleep. They had just returned from ten to twelve hours of throwing out those same nets and pulling them in.

B. They hadn't even caught a minnow, and after they had finished washing out the nets, a stranger tells them to go back and throw out their nets again.

C. The **pessimist** says, "Again? Go out after we have been out all night? We haven't been back thirty minutes, and he wants us to go again. If this stranger knew what he was talking about, why didn't

he tell us to go back out before we washed the nets?"

D. The **optimist** says, "What does this mysterious stranger know that I don't? I listened to him speak from the boat as I was washing the nets and his words penetrated my heart.

E. He was speaking with an authority I never heard before, and even though hundreds, maybe thousands of people were present, it was as if he were only speaking to me."

F. So, with the optimist and the pessimist on board, Simon Peter sets sail to throw out the nets one more time.

V. Exposition [Part IV]

- The **pessimist** says: "Look at the nets!"
- The **optimist** says: "Look at the fish!"

A. The **pessimist** says, "The nets are breaking! Jesus, you're making my life miserable. Now I've got to spend all my time repairing my nets. I've got enough to do without having to repair these stupid nets!"

B. The **optimist** says, "Look at all the fish! I can sell them and buy new nets and a new boat. Thank You Jesus!"

C. The nets represent the things we want to hold onto. The fish represent what God wants to give us. Some people would prefer to keep their nets unbroken rather than to receive a miraculous provision from God.

D. The **pessimist** complains when the nets are empty and complains again, when the nets are full. We can always choose what we want to see.

E. A **pessimist** sees a difficulty in every opportunity. An **optimist** sees an opportunity in every difficulty.

Point: We can either rejoice over the fish or complain about the nets.

VI. Exposition [Part V]

- The **pessimist** says: "God is sinking our boats!"
- The **optimist** says" "God is blessing our boats!"

A. They signaled to their partners in the other boats, for them to come and help them - "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." (Luke 5:7)

B. Can't you hear the pessimist whining? "These nets are so heavy! My back is killing me! Call a doctor. I think I threw my back out. I'll sue!"

C. The optimist says, "This is great! I've never seen a haul like this before! Only God could do this. We need help!"

D. When God starts blessing our boat, we'll need to make adjustments: Repair the nets. Hire more help. Clean up the boat.

E. We can either complain about our boat sinking or rejoice over God's provision!

VII. Exposition [Part VI]

- The pessimist says: "I'm not a bad person!"
- The optimist says: "I'm a sinful man!"

A. The optimist realizes his true condition before God. The pessimist tries to cover up his spiritual condition.

B. Simon Peter had called Jesus "Master" before he performed the miracle. Now he calls Him "Lord." Simon had seen something beyond the miracle.

C. Peter wasn't thinking about all the fish that had jumped into the net. He was thinking about the Lord who caused them to jump into the net.

D. He no doubt said to himself, "If the Lord has control over the fish in the sea, then he needs to have control of my life as well." Peter never realized his sinful condition until now.

VIII. Exposition [Part VII]

- The pessimist says: "I am losing my fishing business!"
- The optimist says: "I am gaining eternal life!"

"... 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." (Luke 5:10b-11)

A. After the boats returned to land, these fishermen left everything and followed Jesus.

B. They left their boats, the source of their livelihood. They forsook their nets, the tools of their trade. They abandoned their tremendous haul of **fishes** ((The Scripture says **fishes** in Luke 5:9, meaning that there was a different variety/species of fish in their net.))

Comment: This catch would have brought in more money than they ever dreamed of.

C. All those no doubt thousands of fish - they left every one of them behind. What have you left behind to follow Jesus?

IX. Summary

A. God had a purpose for their empty nets, and it was not to make them frustrated and angry. Now he had a purpose for their full nets.

B. It wasn't so they would have an abundance of fish. It was to prove that He could provide for them wherever and whenever He wanted to.

C. Why would they leave their boats and fish after they brought in the largest catch they had ever experienced? It was because they discovered something better. They found a new reason to live. From now on they would fish for men, not fish.

D. What about the loss of income? No problem! They were convinced that if Jesus could provide that many fish, then surely He could provide for all of their needs as well.

E. Many people haven't figured that out yet. They are still

laboring in their own strength, pulling in empty nets and complaining about them.

So, which are you? The pessimist or the optimist?

Seeing the Positive

- How did you respond the last time you pulled in an empty net?
- If Jesus tells you to throw out your net again, will you obey, even if you don't understand?
- Do you have unwavering faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the Scripture passages that follow, by filling in the blank spaces and as always, each passage has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

"_____ is that man that maketh the Lord his _____, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as _____ to lies."

[Psalm 40:4]

"For thou art my _____, O Lord God: thou art my _____ from my youth."

[Psalm 71:5]

"_____ in the Lord with all thine _____; and _____ not unto thine own _____. In all thy ways _____ him, and he shall _____ thy paths."

[Proverbs 3:5,6]

"And all _____, Whatsoever ye shall ask in _____, _____,

ye shall _____."

[Matthew 21:22]

"But my God shall _____ all your _____ according to his _____ in _____ by Christ Jesus."

[Philippians 4:19]

"I have been _____, and now am _____; yet have I not see the _____, nor his seed _____ bread."

[Psalm 37:25]

"_____ yourselves therefore under the _____ hand of God, that he may _____ you in due time: _____ all your _____ upon him; for he _____ for you."

[1 Peter 5:6,7]

My sincere prayer is that this lesson has been a blessing to you. May the Lord continue to bless and keep you as we walk up the King's Highway together.

Jude 3
Pastor Austin