

032920 Luke 5:1-11

## Confession Series: Jesus Stays

What's the first thing you would say, if you were face to face with Jesus right now? If the holy Son of God himself was standing right there in your living room, what would you say to him? Would words come easily? Would you be scared? Nervous? Excited? Would you boldly tell Jesus all the great things you've done as a Christian? Or would you feel ashamed of the not-so-great things going on in your life? Would you feel worthy to say anything at all to the perfect, holy, Lord of the universe?

Maybe you can relate to what Peter says to Jesus, in our Bible story for today. Peter's at work, in his fishing boat. Jesus asks Peter to let him sit in the boat, so he can teach the huge crowd of people gathered on the shore. After he's done teaching, Jesus tells Peter to put the boat out into the deep water for a catch. Peter's doubtful. He and his crew have fished all night, and caught nothing. But he gives it a try; and, sure enough, they catch an enormous, miraculous amount of fish.

Peter suddenly realizes that this man in the boat, Jesus of Nazareth, is not just a man. He realizes that he's in the presence of God. Peter falls down before Jesus, and what does he say? Face to face with the holy Son of God, Peter pleads, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

What would you say to Jesus, if he were standing there with you right now?

On that day in the boat, Peter is just beginning to learn who the Lord Jesus really is. But Peter already knows himself very well. He's well aware of his shortcomings, his sinful nature, his impulsiveness. Peter knows he's been a failure when it comes to the commandments, a disappointment to

God over and over. In this moment, sensing Jesus' holiness, Peter is convicted of his own sin, flooded with guilt, sure of only one thing: his unworthiness.

So he makes his confession. He calls himself a "sinful man." And he is. Peter tells it like it is, 100% honest with his Lord. And, as we've been saying all throughout Lent, with our sermon series about confession, we all need to be honest, humble, open with God. Our confession of sins needs to be truthful, not deceitful; sincere, not perfunctory; candid, not covered up.

When you make your confession today – or whenever you confess your sins to God – try to follow Peter's example, from this story. Imagine you're standing right next to Jesus. He's looking you in the eye, as you make your confession, scrutinizing the depths of your soul. Nothing you've ever done, said, or thought, is hidden from him. So what can you say to him?

"I am a sinful man." These words of Peter are a really good start. "I am a sinful woman. I am a sinful child, teenager, parent, spouse, pastor. Lord Jesus, I am a sinful person," we confess.

But notice what else Peter says, there on the boat. His confession is earnest, heartfelt. But it leads him to make a startling request. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." "Depart from me," Peter pleads. "Go away from me, Jesus. Remove yourself from my presence. Distance yourself from me, Lord."

Not that Peter doesn't like Jesus, or long to be in his blessed presence. Peter makes this extreme request – "Depart from me" – because he knows that he's not deserving to stand next to the Christ, the Son of God. No sinful human being is worthy to be in the presence of our pure, perfect God. So is

Peter's request drastic? Yes. But is Peter's request 100% on point? Yes!

And then comes my favorite part of the story. This part gives me joy, offers me hope. Because I'm no different than Peter. I'm a sinful man, and Jesus has every right and every justification to not just practice 6 feet of social distancing with me, but to practice divine distancing, eternal distancing, total spiritual distancing. Because the sin in my life – and the sin in your life – is serious business. And it puts us in serious jeopardy with Jesus.

But what does Jesus do in the story? Peter begs him to depart from him, but what happens? This is my favorite part of the story. Jesus stays. Jesus remains in the boat. The Bible story doesn't say that, specifically; but it's obvious and clear when you read the story that Jesus stays. Peter's curled up in a ball at Jesus' feet, overwhelmed with shame, a truly guilty man; but Jesus stays. He stays in the boat. He stays with Peter.

He could reject Peter. He could easily condemn him. Because Peter's a sinner. It's so important for us to realize, though, that Jesus stays. The story goes on, and Jesus has something really important to say to Peter next; but for today let's focus on the fact that Jesus stays.

What a stunning truth this is about our God! What a glorious picture this paints of our Lord! Jesus stays with Peter in the boat. This is God in the flesh. The Son of God didn't come to this earth to see if he could find some righteous, saintly followers. He knew there were none. Jesus didn't select only the disciples he thought might be good enough. He knew none of them were. Our Lord didn't recoil, reject, or depart when Peter's sin was confessed truthfully. Jesus knew Peter needed help, Peter needed mercy, Peter needed love, Peter needed forgiveness. So Jesus stayed.

And this is the nature of our wonderful, compassionate, gracious God. He came into this world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, by giving his life. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. And greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends, for Peter, for us. Jesus laid down his life for you.

In these days of social distancing, take heart. Jesus stays with us. In these days of Lent, look to the cross, where Jesus stayed, to the bitter end, to accomplish our salvation. And as we make our confession now, let's remember how Jesus stayed with Peter in the boat that day. Please join me in speaking, humbly, honestly, truthfully, our confession. Read with me, if your bulletin is before you, or just pray along with me.

## **ORDER OF CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

P: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness. Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C: **Who made heaven and earth.** *(Psalm 124:8)*

P: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C: **And you forgave the iniquity of my sin.** *(Psalm 32:5)*

*(Silence for reflection on God's Word and self-examination)*

P: O almighty God, merciful Father,

C: **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto you all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended you and justly deserved your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray you of your**

**boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being. Amen.**

P: Upon this confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**