

**Jesus Calls His Disciples: Jesus Calls Us – Matthew 4:18-25**

Each day this week at Vacation Bible School we traveled to the Sea of Galilee. Every one of our Bible lessons taught us something about a special gift that only Jesus can give—the gift of his grace. Grace is God’s free gift of his undeserved love that moved him to sacrifice everything to save sinners like you and me. As sinners, we do not deserve God’s love. We do not deserve God’s forgiveness for our sins or a new life or eternal life with our Savior Jesus, but God in his grace gives us all that through faith in him. God’s grace truly is amazing!

Our first adventure took us to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was just beginning his public ministry there in the region of Galilee, and there he called his first disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They had been actively engaged as fisherman by trade, but Jesus called them to be “fishers of men”. Jesus didn’t wait for them to come to him. No, he called them and they dropped everything to follow him.

By grace, Jesus calls us to follow him through his Word and through the waters of Holy Baptism connected with that Word. By grace, Jesus calls us to be his children through faith in him—just like he called his first disciples. By grace, Jesus makes us his children through the hearing of that powerful Word of God. What amazing grace that Jesus, the Son of God and Lord of heaven, would call us to follow him!

*Hear now a reading from Matthew 4.*

**Jesus Teaches from the Boat: Jesus Teaches Us – Luke 5:1-11**

Our second adventure took us back to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The crowds following Jesus were growing larger and larger every day as people heard about his healings and his teaching with authority second-to-none. One day the crowd grew so large that Jesus had to use Peter’s boat to teach the people so they could hear about the true God and his love for them. His disciples learned why Jesus had called them—to bring people to learn about Jesus, their Savior from sin and the Giver of grace and eternal life. Later when his authoritative Word caused a miraculous catch of fish, Jesus’ disciples learned that he wasn’t just another prophet, but God himself. Peter recognized his sinfulness and confessed his sins before the Lord. In his grace, Jesus forgave his fear and guilt. He then directed these disciples to take his Word to souls who desperately need to hear it.

Did you ever notice the amazing miracle that happens when you read the Bible or attend a group Bible study or listen to a sermon? Now it’s not as visible as the miraculous catch of fish, but it’s even more miraculous because by nature, our hearts are empty, lifeless, and dead. They’re corrupted with sin and blame and shame, failure to do what is right and guilt for doing what is wrong. So we read God’s Word and recognize our sinfulness. We hear that God is a holy God who demands perfection and we recognize how much and how often we’ve failed. We confess sin before God, yet in his amazing grace, he forgives us. Through God’s Holy Word, Jesus teaches us about God’s plan to save us now and forever—a plan that begins and ends with him. We hear that Word. We read that Word. We study that Word and we believe in Jesus as our gracious Savior.

*Hear now a reading from Luke 5.*

**Jesus Calms the Storm: Jesus Keeps Us Safe – Mark 4:35-41**

Our third adventure took us out on the Sea of Galilee for the first time. Jesus was exhausted from a busy day of teaching and healing. So he told his disciples to sail across the lake. Jesus quickly fell asleep. Suddenly a storm came sweeping down the lake and the disciples were terrified. What was going to happen to them? So they woke up Jesus, who promptly calmed the storm with three words—“Peace! Be still!” How little they had trusted in the Son of God, but how gracious he had been to them even amidst their fear!

There are times when you and I are just as terrified as those disciples. Worries and concerns and fears for ourselves or loved ones threaten to overwhelm us like waves swamping the disciples’ boat. We fear for our lives, for our livelihoods, for our loved ones. We fear and wonder how we’re going to escape. We wonder why Jesus seems to be sleeping when we need him most, but then he comes to you and me through his Word and Sacraments—“Peace! Be still!” He reminds us of his constant presence. He forgives our sins and strengthens our faith to trust in him in stillness and storm, in night and day, in health and sickness, in life and death. Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the thoughts and language of these introductions were received with thanks from the “Gangway to Galilee” VBS Director’s materials – © 2014 Concordia Publishing House. Used with permission.

gave his life for us so now we have peace—not in our own might and strength, but in him and and he keeps us safe.

*Hear now a reading from Mark 4.*

### **Jesus Walks on Water: Jesus Saves Us – Matthew 14:22-33**

On Day 4, we found Jesus and his disciples out on the windy Sea of Galilee. Jesus had sent his disciples ahead to cross the lake while he went up on a mountain to pray to his heavenly Father. In the moonlight, the disciples battled against the wind out in the middle of the lake. Suddenly they saw a figure come walking towards them. The disciples immediately thought it was a ghost as Jesus walked right across the water in the shimmering moonlight, but he immediately identified himself and took their fears away. Peter wanted to water walk too, so Jesus let him come out on the water. When Peter saw the wind kicking up the waves, however, he began to sink. He would soon drown, but Jesus reached out his hand and pulled him out of the water and saved him.

Jesus saves us too. So often, you and I are like Peter—willing to go out there on the water, but we soon find ourselves sinking in sin. By grace through faith, Jesus saves us. He did that when he died on the cross to pay for our sin and when he rose from the dead, victorious over death and the devil. Now heaven is ours and we have no need to fear. Jesus continues to walk with us through good times and bad, easy times and difficult, times of joy and sorrow. He helps us walk by faith with eyes focused on him until we reach heaven.

*Hear now a reading from Matthew 14.*

### **Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples: Jesus Provides All We Need – John 21:1-14**

Our final adventure took us to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Who knew that a seaside breakfast could be such an amazing grace adventure! The disciples were waiting patiently for Jesus to show up in Galilee. Such amazing things had happened in recent days. Jesus had been betrayed, arrested, and condemned. He had been crucified to suffer and die, but three days later he was alive and had told his disciples to wait for him in Galilee. So they waited and waited until finally Peter decided to go fishing. The others joined him, but they caught nothing the entire night. The next morning a man on the beach told them to throw their nets out on the other side. When they did, they caught 153 fish! Everyone knew it was Jesus, who also had breakfast waiting for them on the beach. Jesus had provided the fish they needed, but more importantly, by his suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus had provided them with forgiveness and eternal life. What amazing grace!

What amazing grace Jesus shows to us! Jesus provides everything you and I need from the clothes we wear to the food we eat to the homes where we live. He provides the air we breathe and the fun we enjoy, but most important of all, Jesus provides rescue for us from sin and death. He suffered and died on the cross for you and me to take away all our sins. On the third day, he rose again from the dead for you and me to give us eternal life. By grace, through faith in him, Jesus provides his gifts of forgiveness, his love, and eternal life with him in the glories of heaven for you and me. All we can do is stand in awe of such amazing grace from the hand of our living, loving Savior!

*Hear now a reading from John 21.*