

Join the Winning Team, David Xu, 22 Jan 2017

Luke (5: 1- 11)

How many of you remember the “dream team” in 1992? Can you name some of the members of the team?

In 1992, Barcelona Olympic American Man’s basketball team was first time ever made of all NBA players, Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Karl Malone, Larry Bird and Magic Johnson to name a few. They were called “Dream team”. The team was so strong that people were not talking whether they could win the championship; they were talking how much points they could win in each game. Because there was no doubt that they were going to win the competition.

Of course, if you had a group of players like Michael Jordan, it is very hard to lose. But imagine if you had a team of fishermen, tax collector, and deserters, how can you win the game? Who would choose such a team?

Today, let's study these verses and see how Jesus chooses his team.

Be hungry for Jesus

““1One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.”

In Luke 4, we read how Jesus started his ministry; he healed many people, drove out demons, and preached God’s message. Many people were looking for him. They wanted to be touched by him, to be healed by his power. They were hungry for Jesus.

In verse 1, it described how people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. They were so eager to hear from Jesus - they kept pushing close to him; So close that Jesus had to retreat to a boat, and asked fishermen to put out a little from shore, so that he could teach people.

Al-Gharib was born in a Arab country, as majority of people in Arab countries, he was born as a Muslim. To cut long story short, he later pretended that he was converted to Christianity in order to get a job in a Church to survive. However since he encountered Jesus, he had choose between Jesus and Allah. He was so confused and troubled that one day he decided to put this argument in his heart to an end. I quote from his own words “This time, I decided to find the truth at any cost. I fasted for three days in a row without any food, except water and for the first time, I prayed earnestly from my deep heart: I called upon the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. I cried out to the Creator of the universe, the Eternal God whomever He might be. I asked him to reveal

to me the truth and nothing but His truth. I made a promise to Him that if He would answer my questions and reveal Himself to me, I will follow His path even if it will be different than Islam, Christianity and Judaism.”

Jesus answered his prayer. Jesus also gives him visions and dreams. If you seek the Lord with all your heart and mind, Lord will reveal Him to you, because it is his promise. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

I wonder if we have the same eagerness for Jesus. Are we hungry for his word everyday? Do we seek his presence everyday? The people described in this verse set a very good example for us. They had so much passion for Jesus, they didn't notice that they pushed Jesus into water - But this desire, this eagerness is so pleasing to God.

Jesus didn't blame them for getting him wet. Instead, he was so pleased that people were hungry for God's word. He sat on a boat, and taught them.

Listen and Obey Jesus

“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 signaled 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.” (4-7)

After listening to Jesus, we need to take action. Either we listen and obey, or we ignore his teaching and nothing will change in our lives.

Verse 4-7, showed us what happened after Jesus' teaching. Simon was near Jesus when he was teaching. We knew Jesus was on his boat, so he must have heard the teaching.

I am very curious what Jesus was teaching that day. Whatever the topic was, it must be very powerful and very exciting. Peter must be amazed and excited, so when Jesus told him to go into deeper water and let down the net, even though he thought he might waste his time and energy, he did it anyway.

Remember: Simon Peter was a professional fisherman - which meant he made his living by fishing everyday. If he said he couldn't catch any fish, it really means there was no fish to catch that day. Jesus however was a carpenter. How could a fisherman take on a carpenter's advice on how to fish? This is like Richie McCaw asking me how to play rugby.

Peter did listen to Jesus, and he caught so many fish, that he had to ask the other boat to help. Both boats were so bloated with fish that they started to sink.

Dear brothers and sisters, when we hear about Jesus, we need to take action. We can either ignore him, carry on our old life and nothing changes for the better or worse. Or you can be like Peter, listen to Jesus and do as he tells you to, and be prepared that your life will take an amazing turn.

Mitsuo Fuchida (淵田 美津雄). He is perhaps best known for leading the first air wave attacks on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. After war, He was surprised to find his former flight engineer, Kazuo Kanegasaki, alive. Kanegasaki told Fuchida that they were not tortured or abused in US prison camp. A young lady, named Peggy Covell, who served them with the deepest love and respect; whose parents: missionaries, had been killed by Japanese soldiers in the Philippines.

In the fall of 1948, Fuchida was handed a pamphlet about the life of Jacob DeShazer, a former U.S. Army Air Forces staff sergeant and bombardier, told his story of imprisonment, torture and his account of an "awakening to God." This experience increased Fuchida's curiosity of the Christian faith. In September 1949, after reading the Bible for himself, he became a Christian. Fuchida created the 'Captain Fuchida Evangelical Association' based in Seattle, Washington and spoke full-time of his conversion to the Christian faith.

Fuchida heard the Gospel, he took action, and his life changed. My dear friends, if you hear about Jesus, please take action. And like Fuchida, read the Bible, talk to Christians; seek and you will find. Your life *will* be changed.

Confess and follow Jesus

"8When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10and 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." 11So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

In verse 8, Peter immediately knelt down in front of Jesus, and confessed that he was sinner. He said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" He thought a sinful man as he was, didn't even worth to be so close to Jesus.

Indeed, we are not worthy for the Lord, the question is do you want to admit it? One of the biggest hurdles that stops people believe in Jesus is to confess our own sinful nature. In Chinese tradition, we believe everyone's nature is good. "when people were born, their nature were good" (人之初，性本善)。But this doesn't explain, how could people become bad and evil. You may say, those people were influenced by bad people. Yet, if everyone was born with good nature, and everyone is surrounded

by good people, how can some turn to bad person? Unless we are not as good as we think we are.

So what Peter did and said was remarkable. He first fell to Jesus' knee, a posture that showed his submission to Jesus authority. Then he confessed that he was a sinner. His submission was precious to the Lord. Although Peter fell many times after following Jesus, even denying Jesus 3 times, Jesus still chose him and used him greatly.

Jesus then called them to follow him. And what did they do? Did they say, "let's think about it, and have a good discussion. We will let you know later?" No, we read in verse 11 "they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." They made their decision on the spot, and left everything to follow Jesus.

Let's challenge ourselves, do we have the gut to leave everything to follow Jesus? I think about an opposite example in Matthew 19, a young rich man came to Jesus, he wanted to enter eternal kingdom. He kept all commandments, but when Jesus told him to sell all his assets and follow him, young man left with sadness. What a pity, this young man missed this golden opportunity.

The other side of the story is even more amazing. Did Jesus set up some interview criteria for his disciples? Did he look for education degree, experience in mission field, etc? Did he have a HR procedure to follow, like here in NZ you normally need to go through a few steps before you can get an interview?

NO. We don't need any qualification to join Jesus' team, all we need is our willingness to follow him. Peter, James and John were fishermen, Matthew was a tax collector, tax collectors were traitors in Jewish people - Like Chinese (汉奸) . Jesus didn't look at people's outside at all. He looks at our hearts. As long as we open our hearts to Jesus and submit to his authority, we can be used by him in very amazing ways.

Peter and his friends followed Jesus, and later other disciples joined them. This was a team made up of normal people just like you and me. And Jesus used this team. This team later conquered the "dream team" at the time- The Rome Empire. Where ever this team goes, people are transformed, and one day this team will conquer the whole world; "all knees will bow, all tongues will confess that Jesus is our Lord".

My dear friend, it is now the time for you to join this team. A team led and coached by God himself. A team will win the whole world.