

## How May A Person Obtain A True Blessing From The Work Of His Hands?

Text: Luke 5:1-11

Suggested Hymns:  
448, 348, 346, 294, 365

- 1) If He, Hears And Keeps The Word Of God
- 2) If He Diligently Performs The Work Of His Calling,  
Trusting In God
- 3) If He Returns Thanks To The Lord For Temporal  
Blessings

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 5:1–11, *<sup>1</sup> So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup> and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.*

*<sup>3</sup> Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*

*<sup>5</sup> But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." <sup>6</sup> And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. <sup>7</sup> So 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.*

*<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup> So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our Gospel we find fishermen at work. We must all work, every one in his calling. The divine command given to Adam after the fall is, *“<sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground.”<sup>1</sup>*

From the fact that this command was given after the fall it has been inferred that work is a divine punishment, and that no work would be required of man if he had not fallen into sin. But this is a mistake. In the second chapter of Genesis we read that *“the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”<sup>2</sup>*

So Adam had to work in the garden of Eden even before the fall. He worked with joy and pleasure, and there was no disagreeable feature connected with his work as long as he was in the state of innocence.

But a great change came upon Adam after the first act of disobedience. He became tired and fatigued. When he worked hard and exerted himself, sweat trickled down from his brow. This was the curse of sin.

We read about this in Genesis 3:17–18, *<sup>17</sup> Then to Adam [God] said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.*

In different parts of the Scripture we are exhorted to work. In the Book of Proverbs, for instance, we are told, *“<sup>6</sup> Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, <sup>7</sup> Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, <sup>8</sup> Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.”<sup>3</sup>*

There is a great difference among people as to the achievement of success in their work. Some people are always successful. No matter what occupation, trade, profession, or business they engage in, they always get ahead. Where others have failed, they make a fortune. They get rich.

Others, again, toil and labour and do their utmost to obtain this world’s goods; and it is all in vain. They are poor and remain poor. The rich are generally considered the fortunate class. Many a poor person living in a few

rented rooms scantily furnished, and working hard to obtain the necessities of life envies the rich who live in palaces and fare sumptuously every day.

Yet there is discontent, woe, misery, and hell in many a stately mansion, while contentment, joy, peace, and heaven dwell in many a lowly home.

From this we see that the true blessing of a man's work does not consist in the acquisition of wealth and large possessions. Jesus says, "*one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*"<sup>4</sup> For many wealth is a curse. But how may we obtain a true blessing from the work of our hands?

Let us, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, consider this question which is answered in our Gospel: *How May A Person Obtain A True Blessing From The Work Of His Hands?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. A Person Obtains A True Blessing From The Work Of His Hands If He, Hears And Keeps The Word Of God.**

We read in today's Gospel lesson, "<sup>1</sup> *So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,* <sup>2</sup> *and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.*

<sup>3</sup> *Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat."*

What a beautiful sight this must have been on the shore of Lake Gennesaret — Jesus sitting in the boat and the people on the shore attentively listening to the Word of God which He proclaimed to them from His improvised pulpit!

The fishermen who were washing their nets drop their work for a while and pay attention to the preaching. Simon Peter is one of these fishermen. He does what Jesus tells him, gets into his boat with the Lord, pulls out a few strokes, and sits down in the boat to hear Jesus' sermon while his work rests on the shore.

He does not let his work keep him from hearing the Word of God. And does he lose anything thereby? No, afterwards the Lord most abundantly blesses the work of his hands.

How, then, will you receive a true blessing from the work of your hands? First of all, if you hear and keep the Word of God. Not only on the Lord's day

should you contemplate His Word and come to the Lord's house where the voice of thanksgiving is heard and all His wondrous works are told.

But every day of your life you should use the Word of God. Your home should be a tabernacle of the Most High in which His precious testimonies are read daily and considered. Whoever has not, as yet, made it a practice daily to read the Scriptures, let him do so, and he will find that he does not lose by doing it, but that the little time devoted to a daily contemplation of God's Word is most profitably spent.

There are those who turn aside from the Word of God and keep out of its reach, as much as possible, at the very time when they need it most, when they are in trouble, when it seems as though they could not get along in this life, when tribulation has come to them and want raps at their doors.

They close their Bible, cease to pray, and brood over their troubles at home instead of going to church and having their despondent spirits brightened up, and courage and confidence restored to their gloomy hearts through the comforting power of God's holy Word. How foolish!

Look at Peter. He had toiled all the night and taken nothing. All his labour had been in vain. But does he permit despondency to settle in his heart and to draw him away from Jesus and His divine Word? No, it seems as if the fruitlessness of his labour had made him all the more eager and willing to hear the Word.

Christians should always be influenced in this way by their troubles. Far from permitting misfortunes to draw them away from God and His Word, they should rather come all the closer to Him in the days of distress.

For why does God let distress come to His dear children? He does that, not to punish them and to drive them away, but to draw them to Himself, to test them, to teach them that they must not rely on their own power and ability, but place all their confidence in His gracious divine help.

Peter, who, later on, boasted that he would rather die than deny his Lord and Master, certainly possessed a great deal of self-reliance. But when he had toiled all the night and taken nothing, he was thereby convinced of his own littleness and of his inability to accomplish anything without divine help.

Now was the time for him to hear the Word of God; and he heard with attention, was comforted, and in due time reaped the blessing. — To obtain a true blessing in the work of your calling you must, first of all, hear and keep the Word of God.

## **2. A Person Obtains A True Blessing From The Work Of His Hands If He Diligently Performs The Work Of His Calling, Trusting In God.**

In the second place, you must diligently perform your work, trusting in the Lord.

With diligence you must work. We read in our text, *“**When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”**”*

Jesus does not allow Peter to lie down in the boat and sleep. He does not promise the necessities of life without toil and labour. He commands Peter to launch out into the deep; and there Peter has to let down the nets and do the same work all over again in which he had been engaged during the night. He must work, and work hard, to obtain the divine blessing.

So it is to this day. To obtain God’s blessing you must work, and work diligently. There is no divine promise for the sluggish person, or for him who is too lazy to work. Everybody must work.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *“**Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.**”*<sup>5</sup>

And to the Thessalonians the same apostle wrote, *“**If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**”<sup>11</sup> For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”<sup>6</sup>*

Everyone must work diligently in his calling, either with his brains, or with his hands and feet, either mentally or physically, just as the nature of his employment may be, so long as it is a God-pleasing occupation for the true benefit of the neighbour. Work, labour is the means by which the blessing is obtained.

Many people toil and labour but never derive a true blessing from the fruit of their labour. Why? Because they work without trusting in God.

We read, “<sup>5</sup> *But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”*”

If the times are hard, the prospects bad, always trust in God, do your work in Jesus’ name, say with Simon Peter, “*Master, at Your word I will let down the net.*” In other words, *You, O God, have placed me in my station and calling; therefore I will do my duty and leave all the rest to You.* - Your trust will not be in vain. The Lord will provide.

But what if there are calamities, failures, and all your earnings are lost and spent in that way, and you find it a difficult thing to get along? Is there still a blessing? Most assuredly. “*All things [must] work together for good to those who love God.*”<sup>7</sup>

Your very reverses are turned into blessings if you are a child of God. Our lesson proceeds to say, “<sup>6</sup> *And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.* <sup>7</sup> *So 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.*”

How great must have been Peter’s joy when he saw the net filled with fish! In the joy of the moment, perhaps, he forgot all about the Lord and that this was the Lord’s doing, and set his heart upon this earthly gain.

But the net began to break. His joy was turned into anxiety that all might be lost. And even when the enormous catch had been secured in the boats, there was cause for alarm; for the boats began to sink.

These are the wonderful dealings of God with His children whereby He reminds us that all blessings flow from Him alone, and that we should not set our affection on the things of this earth and forget God.

Always perform the work of your calling diligently and trusting, at the same time, in the Lord, and you will surely not miss the blessing.

### **3. A Person Obtains A True Blessing From The Work Of His Hands If He Returns Thanks To The Lord For Temporal Blessings.**

We have heard in the beginning that the true blessing of a man's work does not consist in the acquisition of wealth and earthly possessions. For many people wealth is a curse that deprives them of their happiness, makes life a burden to them, weighs them down with cares and troubles of various kinds.

And if wealth is the very means of bringing a man into eternal damnation, after he had been faring sumptuously every day upon this earth and enjoying life to his heart's fullest content, what true blessing, what benefit has he of his wealth?

This is the great danger of the riches of this world that by them a person is so easily led into eternal perdition. Jesus says, *"it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*<sup>8</sup>

You will not obtain a blessing from the work of your hands if your profits become a means to lead you into damnation after a godless life upon this earth. You will not obtain a true blessing unless you return thanks to the Lord for His temporal blessings, for that which He grants to you through the work of your hands.

We read, *"<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'"* <sup>9</sup> *For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."*

What a pleasing sight! So astonished and so thankful, at the same time, was Peter that he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"*

In other words he is saying, *Why, O Lord, have I deserved such an abundant blessing? I am a sinner and not worthy of Your grace.* The success of his work he does not attribute to his own skill, but to the grace and mercy of his Master.

Thus the goodness of God, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, should lead you to repentance. If the work of your hands is abundantly blessed, if you receive more than you need for the support of this body and life, then you should perceive your own unworthiness and praise and thank the Lord for His temporal blessings.

In this way you will obtain a true benefit and blessing from your earnings, from the fruit of your labour. You will not squander or apply the same to your own detriment in drinking, gambling, and the like. You will give for the kingdom of God and give to a person who is in need, give to the suffering neighbour, and thus make for yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, as we read in Luke 16:9.

Your thankfulness should also be manifested in forsaking all for Jesus' sake, if He demands it.

At the end of our Gospel we read, "*And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."* <sup>11</sup> *So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.*"

Being asked of Christ to accompany Him as disciples, these fishermen forsook all; they said farewell to their calling and followed Christ to be made fishers of men. Jesus and His Word of Life they valued higher than earthly gain.

In like manner we should manifest our thankfulness to the Lord. When He demands it, we should be ready and willing to sacrifice all that we have gained by His divine help.

When, according to His unsearchable counsel, in His wise providence, He allows us to meet with heavy losses through sickness, calamities, failures, or other adversities, we should say with Job, "*The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.*"<sup>9</sup>

And if the sacrifice we are required to make be ever so great, we should cheerfully submit to His will and always take it for granted that, even if we cannot see into it, the sacrifice is for our own benefit. It is for our eternal welfare, that we should not miss the crown of life which our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has gained for us poor sinners by His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross.

May the Lord, then, guide, govern, and keep us all, as we pursue the work of our calling, and, finally, when our work upon this earth is done, receive us all into His eternal kingdom, and say to every one of us, "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*"<sup>10</sup> Amen.



The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:19

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:15

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 6:6-8

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:15

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:28

<sup>6</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 19:24

<sup>9</sup> Job 1:21

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 25:21