

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Christian Education Sunday  
February 6, 2022  
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoft  
**Christian education is valuable**

One time, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. <sup>2</sup>He saw two boats there along the lakeshore. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. He sat down and began teaching the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch."

<sup>5</sup>Simon answered him, "Master, we worked hard all through the night and caught nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets were about to tear apart. <sup>7</sup>They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." <sup>9</sup>For Peter and all those with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught, <sup>10</sup>and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Jesus said to Simon, "Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people."

<sup>11</sup>After they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

—Luke 5:1-11

WELS congregations care about Christian education. This can be seen so clearly by our school system. Every school day, nearly 45,000 children get to listen to God's Word taught at a WELS school: even right here at Emmanuel Lutheran School and down the road at Arizona Lutheran Academy. What a blessing! WELS congregations care about Christian education. This can be seen so clearly by our called worker training programs. Seen in the programs like Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. We are blessed to have people like Emma Pufahl, Aaron Bode, Samantha Kiecker, Allison Grunke, and Jacob Heyn studying to teach people God's Word. What a blessing! We are blessed to walk alongside fellow believers who recognize that **Christian education is valuable**. The value of Christian education can be seen in the Gospel for today. As we see the power of God's Word, we consider that a valuable Christian education is focused on the powerful Word. As we see Jesus' call Peter, we see the importance of spreading the word about Christian education, which is so much more than a school. **Christian education is valuable**. It is focused on the powerful Word. So, spread the word!

Upon the first interaction with this account, the miraculous catch of fish may strike you as the biggest part. Jesus, the Creator, provides for the fishermen. Now, looking at this account and having that take away is not wrong. Yet, as you read what Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote, this account strikes you for its emphasis on teaching. On the shore of the lake Gennesaret, which is the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught the crowd. As students, the people listened to God's Word. As part of Jesus' teaching, he proceeded to get into Peter's boat. To aid in his instruction, Jesus did an object lesson. Jesus was going to show them how powerful his Word is. So here is the object lesson: Peter and his fellow fishermen were fishing all night. With their late-night fishing, they were unable to catch anything. Then, Jesus told them to drop their nets in the water. Outwardly, this would not make sense, but this is the intention of Jesus' object lesson. At the word of Jesus, the empty waters began to fill with fish. The catch of fish was so large that the fishermen needed another boat to help bring in the catch. What did this lesson teach? It taught that Jesus' Word is powerful. That is a valuable lesson! Following this, we continue to see the power of Jesus' Word. Peter was struck by the power of Jesus' Word. Being instructed by the powerful Word and then seeing this object lesson, Peter recognized that he was a sinful man standing in the presence of God. So, we see the power of Jesus' Word in what he says to Peter. Jesus spoke words of absolution, of forgiveness to Peter. Jesus said, "*Have no fear*." That day on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, Jesus provided Peter and the other fisherman with a **valuable Christian education**. Jesus' teaching was focused on the power of the Word.

This miraculous catch of fish can operate as a cool illustration of the power of God's Word. Martin Luther taught that this miraculous catch can be used to illustrate the power of the Word. Here's the picture according to Luther: The sea is the world. The fish are people. The net is the preaching of the gospel. The boat is the church. Through Jesus' miracle, there is a picture which teaches about the power of the Word. The way that the church catches a multitude of people is with the gospel. The word, the gospel, is how the Holy Spirit converts people and brings them to the church, saving faith. Jesus' object lesson, the miraculous catch, demonstrated the power of his Word. It also illustrates the power of God's Word. That is a **valuable Christian education!**

In this account, Jesus teaches us about the power of His Word. We see that his Word has the power to cause a miraculous catch of fish. We see his Word of forgiveness for Peter. Jesus gave this **valuable Christian education** on the power of his Word. Today, as we consider the blessing of Christian education, we know that it is valuable because it is focused on the powerful Word. Many of you here today love what Emmanuel Lutheran School does. You appreciate the Christian education. But, what do you value about it? The small class sizes? The teacher-student ratio is great. An extensive music program? The junior choir is impressive. But do you appreciate it for what makes it truly Christian

education, the focus on the powerful Word of God? So, if you send your children to a Christian school but do not make sure to regularly bring them to church, do you really value Christian education? If you make sure your kids get to Sunday School but sit in the car while they are there, do you really value Christian education? If you are at every Bible study that we have but do it purely out of obligation, do you really value Christian education? Christian education is so much more than a Lutheran school. Christian education is Adult Bible study, small groups, one-on-one studies. If we are not taking advantage of these times to focus on the powerful Word, we deprive ourselves of something great. We are also failing to do that which God desires of us. Also, Christian education is not just a matter of action, but it is a matter of the heart. As Moses wrote, *“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* (Deuteronomy 6:5) We are sinning if the outward actions are there, but our focus is not on the powerful Word. Have you had such a sinful attitude toward Christian education? I know I have. Too often, I have studied the text of God's Word just to do my job, while my mind and heart were not it. Too often, I have led a worship service with more focus on what I am doing than what God is saying to me. Too often, I have led a Bible study with the desire to make myself look witty and intelligent rather than to walk alongside the people as we listen to God's Word. This is something I have struggled with. I am sure this is something you struggle with as well. Because I have been the congregant in the pew, and I have been the student in the seat. Even more so because I know that you are sinful people like me. Sinful people who have valuable opportunities to focus on the powerful Word of God and squander them. What a shame.

So, let's focus on this powerful Word. The powerful Word of the gospel is the means through which the Holy Spirit brings us wonderful blessings from God. As it says in Romans 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”* This is the message of your Lord Jesus. Your Lord who lived perfectly for you. The Jesus who truly valued Christian education. He faithfully sat at the feet of teachers. He diligently instructed his disciples. Your Lord who died on the cross for your sins. This message that Jesus died on the cross for people who don't even care enough to listen to the message about what he has done. Listen to this powerful Word. Jesus forgives you. Jesus says to you as he did to Peter, *“Do not fear.”* This powerful Word is what makes **Christian education valuable**.

After Jesus teaches Peter and the other fishermen with this miraculous catch, he then sends them out to share the word about what a valuable treasure this education is. **Christian education is valuable. So, share the word!**

We need to acknowledge that this is a special call. Jesus was calling Peter, James, and John to a special position. They were to be three of his closest students during his earthly ministry. Later, Jesus would call these three to be apostles and send them out with His message. Although this is a special call that cannot be applied to all believers of all time, we can see parallels between what Jesus tells Peter and what Jesus sends us all out to do. Jesus was sending Peter, James, and John to go catch people. They would be fishers of men. They were to leave their current occupation, travel with Jesus, and learn from him. This is the special calling that they had. First, they would receive the wonderful value of an education from Christ. Then, he would send them out to spread the word.

People who know that Christian education is valuable want to spread the word. This is like my newfound enthusiasm for Cauliflower crust pizza. So many people here today and family members have heard me advocate for Cauliflower crust pizza. They have heard me talk about how Clockwork in Tempe has the best. They have heard me give a tip that Great Value's cauliflower crust pizza is just as good as the name brand, Caulipower, but three dollars cheaper. I recognized the value of cauliflower crust pizza in my life and naturally wanted to spread the word. How much more do we want to spread the word about the places at which we are educated in the truth of God's Word. **Christian education is valuable. So, we spread the word.**

Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School are where you are instructed with the powerful Word of God. From Sunday School to JOY fellowship, from Sonshine preschool to Adult Bible study, and every age in between. If we do not yearn to come and learn. If we do not desire to tell others about this place where the powerful Word of God is taught. Well, then, shame on us. Because here, this word is shared with us week after week. Every single week, the gospel is taught here at Emmanuel. Every single week, the powerful message of peace in Jesus. Every single week, people can hear that all their sins are forgiven in Jesus. Every single day, people can hear that they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. What a wonderful place this is. And today you hear it too. You are forgiven in Christ Jesus. You are clothed with his righteousness. You will live forever in heaven. **This Christian education is valuable. So, take advantage of the opportunities. Also, tell people who don't know about these opportunities to come to check us out. Invite them to Bible Basics. Invite them to Sunday morning Bible study. Invite them to come to hear the powerful word of the gospel at Emmanuel. **Christian Education is valuable. So, spread the word!****

Emmanuel Lutheran loves Christian Education. Christian Education is done at our school. It is done at our church. It is done in our homes. We love Christian Education because this is people getting in contact with the powerful Word of God that proclaims forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus. **Christian education is valuable. It is focused on the word, so spread the word.** Amen.