

Jesus Interrupts the Comfortable **Luke 5:1-11**

Good morning! We're starting a new series today called "Divine Interruptions". Have you heard of that phrase before? You've heard of "Divine Intervention", right? But "Divine Interruptions"? Divine interruptions are those moments when God enters your life without you asking him. Unlike in divine intervention when somehow you want God to do something in your life.

Whether we admit it or not, we don't want to be interrupted when we're on a certain course and we feel like it's the best course for us. Don't you feel annoyed when someone breaks into the set routine of your life? If you are bored and lonely, you might rejoice at the interruption. But if you are fairly comfortable with your schedule or routine, interruptions are annoying and unsettling.

How about that friend who calls at midnight, just to chat? Or that salesman that shows up at your door just when you've sat down to dinner? Or the lockdown and restrictions on your movements because of covid? Or on a more serious note, that interruption that comes with marital failure, or children who have gotten into trouble with the law. There are all kinds of interruptions in our lives, some good and some bad, but we all have them.

In this series, we'll look at good interruptions, interruptions of a divine nature. Interruptions instigated by God because we're on a path of indifference, misfortune, or even self-destruction. We'll find that Jesus had a way of interrupting all kinds of people.

In this series, we'll focus on the way that Jesus interrupts our lives. In our text today, Jesus breaks into the life of people well-set in their routine – people we are calling, "The Comfortable." I think that description could be used to refer to a lot of us. The title of this message is, "Jesus Interrupts the Comfortable".

Let's open our Bibles and turn to **Luke 5:1-11**. Please keep your Bibles open on that passage as we take a look at how Jesus interrupted the lives of his early disciples. When Jesus interrupted them, we'll see how he made them get out of their comfort zones.

So, what I want you to see this afternoon is that **when Jesus interrupts the comfortable**

1. HE CALLS THE COMFORTABLE TO SERVE.

*One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. – **Luke 5:1-3 (NLT)***

Jesus was teaching a multitude by the Sea of Galilee. And the crowd that He was teaching became so large that it was pushing Jesus back. He needed to find a way to be seen and heard by the crowd. The boats of two fishermen were nearby – Simon Peter's boat was one of them. Jesus had already encountered Simon in the previous chapter, having been to his home and healed his mother-in-law. Jesus had served Simon – now Jesus was calling Simon to serve Him. In the future He will call Simon to much greater and more challenging things, but for now, all He needs is his boat.

By the same token, Jesus is calling us to service today. We often live as though we are to be served. Many churches and church members have forgotten that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. The church does not exist only to serve our every whim and fancy, but to provide a channel through which we, as members of the body can give of ourselves in service to Christ.

I know there are hindrances to service. Some Christians are eager to serve but they hold back. They don't push the boat. Why is that? If you're someone like that, probably you cite one of these two reasons, or maybe both reasons:

a. I don't think I'm capable.

If you think this way, you're in good company. That's what Moses thought. That's what Jeremiah thought. That's what Mark thought. Moses said, "Lord, I'm slow in speech. I'm not a good speaker." Jeremiah said, "Lord, I'm too young. No one will listen to me." Mark might have said, "Lord, I'm afraid. I can't do missions with Paul anymore who go to dangerous places."

Guess what! After a little more prodding from God, and some pushing, too, they did it anyway and accomplished great things for God. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Jeremiah became a great prophet of God. And Mark became an able and reliable partner of Paul in missions later on. You see, it doesn't depend on your abilities. It depends on your availability. If you're available, then God can make you capable. As the old saying goes, "God will not lead you where his grace cannot keep you."

God's grace is sufficient for you. Paul himself, there were times he felt weak and not able to continue his work. But what did Jesus tell him? "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

You see, God is not looking for people who think they are strong or can do things by their own wisdom or capabilities. As is often the case, people like this fall flat on their faces. God looks for those who recognize their weaknesses and submit to him anyway.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are

powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.” (1 Cor. 1:26-28 NLT)

So, don't think you're not capable. God's got your back. Another reason you may cite is

b. I'm afraid of failure.

You know, you can never be successful if you're afraid of failure. Every successful person has failed at least once. A Chinese proverb says, "Failure is the mother of success". When you fail at something, you are actually one step closer to finding a way that will succeed. Walt Disney failed many business ventures and was fired by a newspaper editor because he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas."

Now, I know the Disney company is no longer as conservative as it used to be. But it started out as a family-oriented company with emphasis on Christian values like faith, honesty, integrity, good morality, and such. It produced Christian films like the Ten Commandments and Snow White. Do you know Snow White is a devout Christian? Half way through the movie, there's a brief scene where Snow White is shown praying. With head bowed and hands clasped together, she asks God to bless the seven little men who have been so kind to her.

The Disney company had such good beginnings because Walt Disney was a Christian. He was raised in a Congregationalist church by his deeply religious parents. His faith had a large influence on his life and work. Sadly, his successors did not and do not share his values anymore.

My point is, if you keep trying like Disney, who was rejected a few times, you'll find success later on. Especially, if your mission is to glorify God through your work. God is your #1 backer. You don't need the big bucks of the world's businesses to back you up! The Bible says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Adoniram Judson is considered to be the first American missionary. In 1813, he traveled to Burma with his wife to start their mission. The initial years in Burma were marked by great difficulties for the missionaries. They suffered from tropical illness and also lost a son, Roger. However, the brave couple never gave up on their faith. Judson spent a few years in learning the Burmese language and adapted the local customs to evangelism. It was six years later when he baptized his first convert. Six years of hardship before their first convert!

Over the next few years, he founded a church and established schools. He also worked tirelessly to build a Baptist Christian community. He continued toiling for the cause of Christianity until the very end of his life. At the time of his death, he left behind the translated Bible, 100 churches, and over 8,000 believers.

Judson never gave up despite his failures. God worked in his life in a mighty way as a result.

Going back to our story, Simon allowed Jesus to use his boat as a pulpit, a place where Jesus could teach people who came to hear him. What are we allowing Jesus to use in our lives? How about our time? Are we allowing our time to be devoted to the cause of Jesus Christ? Or how about our money? Are we giving financially to the kingdom to the point that it makes us a little uncomfortable? Or how about our spiritual gifts? Are we using the gifts that God has given us to His glory? Now some of you might be able to answer, “Yes” but others of us really need to sit down before God and say, “God, I haven’t been serving you the way that I ought to, but that all ends today.” Friend, you’ve got to push the boat.

Jesus calls the comfortable to serve. Also,

2. HE CALLS THE COMFORTABLE TO TRUST

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.” “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the

*nets down again.” And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m too much of a sinner to be around you.” – **Luke 5:4-8 (NLT)***

Jesus, the carpenter, directed the experienced fisherman where to go to catch fish! Jesus told Simon to fish at an unlikely time and place – in deep water and bright daylight. Simon was skeptical but chose to act in faith. I want you to notice closely what he said in reaction to Jesus’ command – *“Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.”* (Luke 5: 5)

“Because you say so...” – those are the words that should be coming to the lips of every one of us when we hear Jesus calling us. In fact, maybe we should all adopt this as a life verse. Sometimes Jesus’ challenges make us very uncomfortable, because they don’t sound logical or reasonable to us. So we tend to resist the call that He makes – but what if we changed that and said, “Jesus, we don’t understand why you are calling us to this – but because you say so, we will.” Very often, God’s power works in ways and at times that we do not expect. We need to act in faith that God is capable of doing what He chooses to do. And to act in faith even when we have doubts. The results can be astonishing when we act in faith.

Jesus controlled the fish of the sea and saw to it that the fishermen had a huge catch of fish. Had Simon relied only on his own instincts and refused to obey Jesus because what he commanded did not make sense to him, he would have never seen the amazing catch of fish. He would have robbed himself of a miraculous experience. Never forget that Jesus controls the circumstances of your life too!

As we act in faith step by step, God will use His Word, the words of other people and circumstances to confirm to us His call and purpose. A.W. Tozer said, *"Anything God has ever done, he can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, he can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, he can do for you."*

I read the story of this old African woman who demonstrated faith in God's power to provide. Although she lived in a tiny mud hut, she had taken on the responsibility of caring for 56 orphans. One day, a small group of missionaries had arrived in this grandmother's native Swaziland to plant gardens. On the final day of their visit, they came upon her tiny home, surrounded by the many children in her care. A number of little gardens had been dug up all around the hut, but oddly, no plants were growing in any of them. The missionaries learned that, earlier on the same day, the woman had told the children to dig lots of gardens. When the children asked her why—since they had neither seeds nor money—she responded, "Last night I asked God to send someone to plant gardens for us. We must be ready for them when they come." The volunteers had come with hundreds of ready-to-plant seedlings. God sent them to the very place where one of his servants had begged for his intervening hand. The faithful grandmother and her children were ready when the answer came.

This woman trusted God. Are we ready to trust God, too, when he asks us to venture out in order to serve him? Maybe even do things for him even though we don't understand? Even though the world may call it crazy?

God calls us to obey, not to understand. Then, afterwards we understand the reason why he wants us to obey. God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,...As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) Friend, you've got to push the boat.

Jesus calls the comfortable to serve. He also calls the comfortable to trust.
And finally,

3. HE CALLS THE COMFORTABLE TO COMMIT.

His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. –

Luke 5:10-11 (NLT)

Remember, these men were fishermen. Their entire lives were built around that purpose. More than likely, they had never known anything else. They were comfortable in their surroundings. Jesus told them that they would now fish for people instead of fish! What a radical change!

What if Jesus called you to change the entire focus of your life and work? Are you more committed to your own comfort than you are to Him? We see a response that is so simple to read yet truly remarkable in its simplicity – "They left everything and followed Jesus."

Jesus called them out of the place called "Comfortable" and they responded willingly. Jesus has called us to do the same. The call to follow Jesus is always a call to leave – to leave commitment to sin and self. They could not do both remain in their boats as fishermen and follow Jesus. We cannot do both either.

In William Alexander's book, *"The \$64.00 Tomato,"* comes this food for thought: If you were doomed to live the same life over and over again for eternity, would you choose the life you are living now? The question is interesting enough, but if you think about it there is really the unspoken, potentially devastating follow-up question. That is, if the answer is no, then why *are* you living the life you are living now? So, stop making excuses, and do something about it. If we know that God has a challenging, exciting, fulfilling future for us, why do we insist on leaving things the way that they are?

It's been said that successful people are successful because they're willing to do the things that ordinary people are not willing to do. For example, great business leaders don't become successful by shuffling papers all day with one eye on the clock; they work hard, they work efficiently, they get things done, and they put in the extra hours when necessary. It's not always easy, but it's possible. Great parents don't become great parents by merely nodding at their children every few days and handing them some extra spending money. They go to ball games and recitals, they go to church together, they take vacations together, they spend evenings together enjoying each other's company. Great parents achieve greatness through providing direction, security, discipline, and love. It's not always easy, but it's possible. Great marriages aren't made through merely an equitable living arrangement: you do the dishes, I'll do the yard. Great marriages are made when two people share their hearts and souls and dreams with one another, when they honor and respect and build trust in one another, when they put the needs of the other ahead of their own needs. It's not always easy, but it's possible.

In the same way, a great Christian life doesn't occur by merely attending church on Sunday and making a half-hearted attempt to live by the 10 Commandments. A great Christian life occurs when a person becomes radically committed to following Jesus Christ and doing his will. It's not always easy, but it's possible. And it is what God wants for your life – He wants you to do whatever it takes to serve Him the way He wants you to serve.

Last week, I mentioned that in early 2009, God took my family suddenly from the hustle and bustle of NY to the laid back, quite conservative region of Northern Virginia. Where we settled and began to live comfortably in a modest but beautiful two-story rented house in Sterling with a large backyard where our children enjoyed playing. I was employed in Reston and Bel worked from home. It was an ideal family situation and we felt like it would be like that forever and ever,

Amen. Until we started to attend Fil-Am Community Church. And God started to shake us.

Now, nothing wrong with Fil-Am. People were so nice and are still nice. Amen? But things were getting uncomfortable. God was pushing me. And I pushed back.

When I arrived in Virginia, Pastor Romy and his wife, Tita Kaye, had resigned from this church. Actually, when I was still in New York I called Pastor Romy on the phone because I remembered he was the pastor of this church and told him I was looking for a place to stay. I then drove to meet him here. He said that when I called he had just resigned from the church the Sunday before. And he said that when we spoke on the phone he became excited because he was praying for the Lord to send someone. I doused cold water on his excitement though because I said I came to Virginia to work not to pastor. I said that firmly.

A few months later, I met Pastor Darwin Sokoken, a church planter. When he learned I was now in Virginia, he contacted me, we met at Starbucks and he persuaded me to join him in starting a church in Alexandria. I agreed because I was just going to help him. I became the worship leader and sometime preacher at the fledgling church that met every Saturday morning on Telegraph Ave.

I also began to lead a home group at Fil-Am. Then, something happened that disturbed me. In the middle of that year, I felt a stirring in my heart. It was something I had always been afraid of. There was this gentle whisper that said, "I want you to lead this church." Every time I heard the whisper in my heart I would say, "No, Lord. I can't. I don't want to. Let me lead a home group but not a church." I just didn't believe I could do it again. I failed before.

In the following months, the church started to invite other pastors to speak and to be interviewed for the position. In the meantime, I continued to help Pastor Darwin in starting a church. That little church began to grow.

Then, Pastor Darwin intimated that he was considering me to pastor this church eventually because he was going to retire. My response was just like my answer to the Lord. “No, I can’t. I don’t want to.” Around this time, however, the stirring in my heart grew stronger. But I tried to ignore it every time. I always said, “Lord, I don’t want to become a pastor again. Please call someone else to Fil-Am, not me.”

Around September or October, Fil-Am invited to come, for one weekend a pastor from Texas who I personally know, who was a friend of Pastor Romy as well. That was Pastor Ariel Tolentino. I was excited and told him, “Come and pastor this church. I’ll be your help.” The church offered him the position and he left saying he would pray about it. The church earnestly prayed for him, too.

Then, one night, I had a dream. In my dream, Pastor Ariel was speaking to me and he said, “Pastor Rolly, I’m not accepting the position.” I woke up and said to myself, “Well, OK, that was just a dream. And usually, the opposite is true. He probably would accept Fil-Am’s offer”. A week later, I had another dream. This time, Pastor Ariel’s son Alvin was in the dream.

He said, “Pastor Rolly, papa is not going to accept the position.” I woke up, now feeling greatly disturbed and distressed. Why did I get such a dream twice? The stirring in my heart grew much stronger. Then, a week later, I had another dream. This time, in my dream was my mentor in New York, Pastor Jerry Lepasana. If you ever heard him speak, you knew that he had a very strong and loud voice. He said to me, “Pastor, you know our calling is to preach God’s word to the lost and dying.” I woke up, now with tears in my eyes, the stirring in my heart became a tempest, and finally I became convinced that God really wanted me to lead this church. God pushed me to the edge. And I said, “Yes, Lord, I will do what you want. I’m not a good speaker. I’m not even eloquent.

I have a lot of insecurities. I'm an introvert. But I'll do what you want." I decided to trust God, get out of my comfort zone and put everything in his hands.

Later on, just like in my dreams, Pastor Ariel declined the position. I didn't tell Fil-Am though what the Lord was telling me. At that point, I asked the Lord a favor. "Lord, if you really want me to pastor this church, please provide help because I would need someone to look after my children." Anabel had petitioned her parents to come to the US years before and we knew it would take quite a while before they could come. After my prayer though, we learned that suddenly they received a notice from the US Embassy in the Philippines that their papers were being processed. The year 2010 came, then one night in January, Pastor Romy and Tita Kaye came to visit us at home. He asked me to become the interim pastor and become part of the pastoral search team. I agreed. But I didn't tell him what the Lord was telling me. In the back of my mind, maybe to become the interim was just what the Lord wanted for me.

The next month, Kuya Elvin called and said, "Pastor Rolly, we would like to offer you the position of Senior Pastor of Fil-Am." I was surprised. I said, "Why only now?" Just kidding. Actually, I was surprised because I didn't tell anyone and I asked him what made them arrive at that decision.

It turned out that since it was over a year that the church hasn't found a pastor, he contacted Darrell Webb, the SBCV missions strategist and adviser of the pastoral search committee, in order to get his advice. Darrell then asked Kuya Elvin to contact Pastor Darwin to ask for advice. And Pastor Darwin, the pastor who I have been helping to start a church, recommended me for the position. He pointed out to Kuya Elvin that I can become a bi-vocational pastor. I realized then that God had everything set in place since I arrived in Virginia. Finally, I made a commitment.

On April 25, 2010, around 4 PM, the church voted whether to call me as the pastor of the church. 99% voted yes because there was one who voted no. Whoever that one is, I didn't care to know. I love that person as well. At around the same time, while the church was voting, the plane carrying Nanay Monet and Daddy Lino landed at Dulles airport. That closed the deal.

Folks, if you're comfortable right now, watch out because something is going to take place in your life. Just be ready. Be ready to serve, to trust, and to commit. Friend, let me say one more time, you've got to push the boat.

Today, will you allow Jesus to interrupt the routine of your life and consider anew what He wants for your life. Maybe you don't even have a relationship with Jesus. By that I mean, you haven't fully entrusted your life and your future to Jesus. You've been comfortable in doing things on your own. And if you're honest enough, some of these things are sinful. You know deep inside that you're not getting anywhere, there is no direction in your life. If you want a change for the better, why don't you commit your life to Jesus today? All you need to do is to believe that he died for your sins, that he was buried and then on the third day he rose from the dead. He resurrected to conquer sin and death forever.

The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Because we have sinned, we are condemned to die and be separated from God forever. The Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death." But, you know what, you can be saved from death by putting your faith in Jesus. By believing that his sacrifice on the cross is enough for you to be saved. Your religion cannot save you. Your good works cannot save you. Your philosophy cannot save you. Only Jesus can.