

February 6, 2022 – Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

Jesus' teaching of God's word has begun to draw great crowds. For Simon, James, and John, Jesus' teaching inspires hospitality, then obedience, and then risk. After Jesus' creative power is revealed, fear and amazement leads these three fishermen to leave everything behind to become apostles.

¹Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Let's never lose sight of the fact that Jesus is just weird.

One day, crowds are pressing in on him to throw him off a cliff. Another day, they're pressing in to make sure they capture every last word he has to say because it's great stuff.

Sometimes, Jesus preaches sitting in a house of worship. Other times, he makes a little space for himself by crawling into his buddy's fishing boat. Later, he won't even

be fazed when he's crowded in a home with people spilling out the door and guys are lowering their paralyzed friend down from the roof while he is teaching.

I call Simon Jesus' buddy because Luke gives us a little more interaction in his telling of this call story of the disciples than others of the evangelists do. It's clearer with Luke after he has healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law of her fever. He's been over to the guy's house and in all likelihood, he has probably hung around with these fishermen for a number of weeks. Gotten to know them and how and what their life is.

He really must have built some kind of relationship with them because what he does in verse 4 makes no sense. They were already done. They had worked a long, hard night and came up empty, with nothing to show for it. Now they were ready after doing the dirty work and heavy lifting of cleaning up to go home, maybe grab a quick bite and get some rest.

Try again tomorrow night. Sometimes the fish just aren't biting. They know that. They're fishermen after all and this is what they do and they do it well enough to make it their livelihood.

Jesus is a carpenter from a few towns over who really knows his Scripture backward and forward and has some really exciting insights on that account. He is not a fishermen. He probably really shouldn't be telling fishermen how to do their jobs.

Fortunately for him, it goes better than when he tells his neighbors what they're thinking out loud.

Simon Peter ... knows Jesus is weird.

He addresses him as "Master."

Or in other words, "with all due respect ..."

He's tired. They're all tired. And Jesus has just asked them to do a whole lot of work. Gather up those nets you all

just washed and give it another whirl. Even though the night, the best time for catching fish by net has already come and passed.

Jesus asks us to do stuff that makes no sense.

Relationship with God's weird Son is like that sometimes. It's not easy to stop, hear his voice when it's contrary to every best practice you or I know about whatever it is that we do best, and say, yeah, OK ... even though that's ridiculous and sounds like a waste of time.

Simon evidently saw it that way. "If you say so," he replies.

Now I love this because it's a good, faithful, REAL response.

Reluctance to follow Jesus into the unknown, especially when it doesn't look especially promising, is normal. I think Jesus understands that, too.

I think he has watched most, if not all, of us at some point roll our eyes and mutter under our breath ... and then go to work and out our work in his hands.

And it doesn't always reap these instant rewards like those out fishing that day would pull in. But God loves our grumbling words, our begrudging acceptance and loves maintaining and growing relationship with us, even through struggle and gritted teeth.

Jesus loves bringing us together and I think there's evidence of some of what he's been teaching rubbing off on this rough group of characters in this story. As the weight of the catch becomes too much for one boat's crew to handle, they give a little whistle and a wave and everybody is all in, sharing in this abundance that's just about too much to handle.

It *is* too much for Peter. He responds how many a prophet does to God's call. Nope, not me. I'm not worthy. I can't ... how could I?

Professor Justo Gonzalez points out that Peter doesn't confess any specific sin but he alludes to the way culture taught him to see himself. Good Lutherans already know all people are fully sinners and fully saints, right? Well, Peter wasn't brought up a good Lutheran. He wasn't brought up as a good Jew either. He was one of "those sinners," who didn't darken the door of the synagogue or offer sacrifices at the temple. He was used to that distinction and rejection. Jesus' care and time spent with him and his peers was ... well, cute for a while you could say, but now Peter saw how serious this was becoming. He had to let Jesus know who he was dealing with.

Well, weirdly enough, Jesus knew. He knows good servants for his holy reign can be found elbow deep in fish

guts as easy -- if not easier -- as they can be found in golden cathedrals. Weirdly for Peter, and for James and John too evidently, Jesus was not deterred by their presentation as unpresentable.

OK, so don't be afraid ... standard call-to-ministry disclaimer. And also good to consume with a standard small portion of salt. This is frighteningly life-changing stuff.

Convincing enough to get them to leave everything. Yeah, that's another weird thing that's happens after Jesus has come around. For all that effort, they just leave that catch of fish behind. It's left free for the taking for whoever else comes along and scoops it all up.

That's not fair. It doesn't ensure the rewards go to those who put in the work. But for those who have turned to follow Jesus, that doesn't matter. There's an understanding that there's enough to go around for everyone. Just as there was with the wine at the wedding in Cana.

And there's greater work that lies ahead. There's no specifics on what Jesus taught from the boat that early dawn but there's every indication it was more of what Luke has already recorded from him. Good news to the poor. There's evidence of that in action when he puts in the time with these fishermen. And now they are ready to get to work sharing that good news in word and in deed.

Weird thing is Jesus is calling you and me to go from this place and again hear and heed the call to do very much the same.

Even if it makes us grumble as we get going about it.

Amen.