

Sunday's Sermon

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

February 10, 2019

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Let's Go Fishing

Luke 5:1-11

Let the words that come out of our mouths and the thoughts that form in our minds, be pleasing before you, O Lord, our solid foundation and our Savior. Amen.

Who will go for us? Whom shall I send? Down through the ages, God's question has always begged another question: What are we to do with our lives?

Last week we looked at the subject of "call" and learned that God's invitation to follow Him is not limited to specific vocations in ministry, but that "call" which starts at the font, that "call" to service is extended to all the baptized; all ages, all persons, all races, all cultures, everyone.

God has work to do and in His infinite mercy, He chooses to work through us!

We also saw how God's word affected those who heard it. In last week's lesson when the assembly that was gathered heard the word, they rejoiced, they said "Amen" and raised their hands in praise.

But they also wept when they realized they had fallen short of God's expectations as found in His Word.

In today's Gospel, those gathered had such a hunger to hear God's word that they crowded around Jesus so tightly He had to turn a fishing boat into a pulpit so that the entire crowd could hear.

As I look at the state of Christianity and particularly the condition of the Christian church, it makes me wonder, where is the hunger, where is the need to be fed the word of God? Will it take a miracle to draw our attention to the potential and power that lies in His Holy word?

Well, a miracle is exactly what it took for the fishermen in this fifth chapter of Luke.

When Jesus had finished teaching, he challenged one of those who listened to his words, and that person was Peter. Jesus tells Peter, “you’ve been listening to my word, you have been focused on my teachings, I have Good News for you too. I want you to push out into the deep water and see what you can catch.”

Often when we hear the phrase “deep water,” our minds go immediately to someone that is in serious trouble or someone who is experiencing serious difficulties. We usually don’t think of “deep water” as a time or an experience that has the potential for growth and development. But that is what Jesus had in mind for Peter, and later for James and John.

This should have been an epiphany moment, a split second of discovery, the beginning of Peter discerning his call; what it would mean for him to trust, to understand the spiritual and human commitment it would take to follow Jesus; to take that first step of faith.

But wait, for Peter this wasn’t really a “step of faith” moment, it was a step of “self-appeasement,” a moment to make himself feel better about his own situation. Peter tells Jesus, “Granted, we fishermen had a lousy night, the fish were not biting, so we came up empty-handed. Now, I know the fishing business. I am a professional. I didn’t ask for your advice, Jesus, but since you think that you have some new and improved approach to fishing, I’ll try it your way.” Note the slight tone of self-centeredness, tempered with respect.

So, Peter does what Jesus asks, and what do you know, fish overflowed, not only in his boat, but also in the boat of his buddies. The deep water, the unknown territory, the untested environment did not disappoint. It turned out to be more than Peter expected. It was a net breaking, boat sinking, abundant supply of plenty.

Peter, James, and John were all overwhelmed with what they had just experienced. Jesus had done through Peter what he could not do on his own.

But Peter didn’t automatically jump on the Jesus bandwagon, he immediately took stock of who he was and began to look at his limitations and the fear he could not and would not measure up to what might be required of him. His first step was repentance.

His response wasn’t immediate excuses, his response was the reality of his inability to be worthy of the “call,” to be important enough, to be commendable enough, to merit in some way this unique “invitation.”

If you listened carefully to the Hebrew Scripture as it was read today, you will find that same reality smacked Isaiah right in the face and he confesses that he is a fallible human being. Isaiah says, “Words come out of my mouth that should not. My lips are encrusted with filth.”

And in the Corinthians passage, Paul reminds us of his shortcomings of being a former persecutor of the church. Guess what? We are right there with Isaiah and Paul in feeling inadequate for the task at hand. We all make mistakes. We all have the potential to mess up.

But Jesus reassured Peter, James, and John, just as He assures us, that it's not up to them and it's certainly not up to us. It's up to Jesus to equip us, to empower us, to enlighten us. It's up to Jesus, that's His part in this relationship we have. It's His responsibility on this team to give us insight and understanding, to enable us and give us authority, to prepare us and give us the courage to share His love through our words and through our actions so that others just like us will experience a new way of living.

God, through his Son Jesus, has a comforting word for us all, and that word is that He and He alone will make us faithful to His call to meet human needs and demonstrate the power of His love. He calls us and uses us just as we are, warts and all.

The truth is that none of us can ever measure up on our own terms.

We cannot be good enough, but the Good News is we don't have to try to be good enough, because Jesus took care of our "will work for salvation" signs and replaced them with "grace for all" signs. So, there is nothing to fear.

"Who will go for us? Whom shall I send?" Down through the ages, God's question has always begged another question: What are we to do with our lives?

The answer, we are "called" to catch all people in God's net of love and grace.

So, let's go fishing!

Amen.