

Sunday Lesson – February 6, 2022

GOSPEL: Luke 5: 1-11

“Push Out into Deep Water”

Context

“While Mark and Matthew speak of Jesus walking along the Sea of Galilee and abruptly calling Simon, Andrew, James, and John to follow him, only Luke tells the story of a miraculous catch of fish preceding the call. In Luke’s Gospel, this is not Simon’s first encounter with Jesus. Jesus has already been to Simon’s home in Capernaum and has healed his mother-in-law (4:38-39). Perhaps that explains Simon’s willingness to let Jesus use his fishing boat as a floating pulpit.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/great-catch-of-fish/commentary-on-luke-51-11-2)*

Insight

“This text offers rich possibilities for reflecting on how God calls ordinary people to discipleship and mission. They are simple fishermen, simply doing what they did every day. They are minding their business, cleaning their nets after a long, discouraging night of work, when Jesus comes along, enters into their utterly normal, mundane lives and changes everything.

Jesus calls Simon and his partners as they are. Simon is acutely aware of his unworthiness, but Jesus is not put off by this in the slightest. Jesus does not ask Simon to get his act together, his resume prepared, and then come back for an interview. Rather, Jesus encounters him as he is, tells him not to be afraid, and calls him to a new mission of catching people.

Throughout Scripture we see that human sin, failure, and inadequacy are no obstacles to God’s call. God calls imperfect people to do God’s work, people who are aware of their unworthiness and are often doubting and resistant to God’s call.



God doesn’t wait for them to shape up. God calls them as they are and then works on shaping them into faithful servants.

Jesus’ mission does not wait until we think we are ready. We are called right now — even in spite of our frailty, failures, and doubts, even in the midst of our ordinary, busy, complicated lives. Jesus’ word to Simon Peter is also a word to us: “Do not be afraid.” This is Jesus’ mission, and we trust that he will keep working with us and through us, “catching” others as he has caught us — in the deep, wide net of God’s mercy and love.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/great-catch-of-fish/commentary-on-luke-51-11-2 by Elisabeth Johnson)*

Gospel Reading

“Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon’s and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd. When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.” Simon said, “Master, we’ve been fishing hard all night and haven’t caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I’ll let out the nets.” It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch. Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. “Master, leave. I’m a sinner and can’t handle this holiness. Leave me to myself.” When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee’s sons, coworkers with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “There is nothing to fear. From now on you’ll be fishing for men and women.” They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.” The Message

What It Could Mean?

“The themes in this text around trust, call, discipleship, abundance, discouragement, risk, and persistence are always relevant but have particular resonance during this challenging pandemic time. This is not a call without context. In Luke, the call of these fishermen to discipleship comes in the midst of 1) learning from Jesus’s teaching and 2) witnessing the acts of God. Exploring this pattern has the potential to comfort and equip a community of hearers.

After he has finished instruction, Jesus shifts the conversation to focus on Simon and his nets, setting up the act of God. Simon’s reply acknowledges the reality of limits and scarcity, but also his willingness to listen and try again. Jesus’ mentioning of the “deep water” implies that there may be unexplored areas of potential beyond perceived limits of resources, knowledge, and energy. The response to this willingness is immediate; suddenly they have more fish than two boats can bear.

The size of the catch indicates provision beyond the immediate moment. This is food enough to sell so that the fishermen will have resources beyond today. And, the food that is sold becomes daily sustenance to others. So, while the large catch of fish conveys provision and plenty for Simon and his partners, it also signals a world beyond these fishermen and their immediate needs. The obvious surplus that can feed many more surpasses instinct or ability for hoarding or secrecy. The community is in view.

But our text continues beyond the large catch. Jesus, after providing the gift of plenty and even excess, tells the disciples that they are being called. The image of fishing is still used, but now it involves people. The climax of the story is the call, not the abundance. In their new role, the disciples will gather the people with the message from and about Jesus. They will follow him while leading and serving others.

The way the “fishing for people” unfolds in Luke’s Gospel is not coercive or domineering. It is personal, relational work—deep water work—where healing and plenty follow and mark the encounters of the disciples with Jesus and with God’s people. The interplay between teaching, healing, and call continues. Looking forward, there is death, and then resurrection.

Like the reference of Jesus’s teaching, this is not a question of content, but of faith. It invites the hearers to sharpen their focus and increase awareness, trusting that God will act. This focus on God’s nature and God’s action reminds the hearers of God’s provision and abundance, and also may open up local and contextual space for communities and individuals to identify the next opportunities to minister and serve...” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Kendra A. Mohn)*

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 4:18-22 & Mark 1:16-20](#) *Jesus’ call of these fishermen*
- [Exodus 3:10-12/Isaiah 6:1-6/& Jeremiah 1:6-8](#) *God calls imperfect people to do God’s work*

Thought for the Day

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.” ~ *Isaiah 43:1-2*

Prayer of Good Courage

“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Amen. ~ *Evening Prayer - Evangelical Lutheran Worship*