

Sunday Lesson – Jan 24, 2021

GOSPEL: Luke 5: 1-11

Fish for People

Synopsis

“We see the Lord Jesus helping some fishermen get their lives aimed in the right direction. We know that John 1: 35-42 records the first meeting between Jesus and Peter. The incident in our text takes place about one year later. James and John, and perhaps some others, such as Peter’s brother, Andrew (although unnamed), were present, but the focus in our text is on Jesus and Peter. These men had all met Jesus and had begun to follow Him, but they were not yet completely committed to His mission. This incident redirected their lives.”

(Excerpts from bible.org/seriespage/lesson-18-catching-fish-or-men-luke-51-11)

Insight

“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 (see, for example, Exodus 3:10-12; Isaiah 6:1-6; Jeremiah 1:6-8.) God doesn’t wait for them to shape up. God calls them as they are and then works on shaping them into faithful servants.”

(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/great-catch-of-fish/commentary-on-luke-51-11-2)

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 these challenging days of January 2021.

This text can be heard both as an acknowledgment of a time of emptiness and bleakness, as well as encouragement for discipleship and recognition of Jesus as the source of hope and abundance.

The immediate obedience of the disciples to Jesus in Matthew and Mark is not the emphasis here; 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.

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 act of God here is characterized by abundance and provision. A large catch of fish represents stability and care, support, and having enough. It is a physical manifestation of having one's needs met. If this is where the text would have ended, that provision could have been the focus. It would have celebrated the receipt of daily bread, which is no small thing in that context or in this one. With so many facing food insecurity and a long winter still to come, the image of enough food, of provision and plenty, is compelling.

Further, 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. They can eat again tomorrow. 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. In some ways, this call is similar to their present work; in others, it is different. 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.

What do we know about Jesus that will give meaning to this call that comes not just to the first disciples, but to the weary ones in January 2021? 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.

What are we going to learn in the coming weeks and months about the way God works? 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 by Kendra A. Mohn*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 4: 18-22 & Mark 1: 16-20](#) *Calling Simon Peter Andrew, James & John*
- [Acts 11: 19-26](#) *Catching those who will be empowered to catch others*
- [Luke 14:33/Philippians 3:8/Romans 10:17](#) *What it means to follow Jesus/Christ drawing people to faith*

Thought for the Day

“The best way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick along side it.” ~ *D. L. Moody*

A Prayer

Lord Jesus of fisher folk, you taught your disciples to cast a wide net — not for fish, but for people. Teach us the fishing craft. Make our fingers nimble so we may handle hearts and hands gently; make our minds quiet and patient while we wait for those who are not yet ready to receive you; and make our hearts hungry for your word, for the sake of the one who has captured our hearts already, Jesus Christ. **Amen**