

Nets of Faith by Rev. Jessie Squires

The Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany

Sunday February 7, 2010

Let us stand together for the reading of the Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

Once while Jesus^{*} was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,² he 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.'⁵ Simon 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.⁷ So they signaled to 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.'¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Thanks be to God.

You may be seated.

Some of my favorite memories with my cousins include fishing on Lake Anna.

- My cousins, my little sister, and I would take our little plastic Mickey and Minnie mouse fishing poles and we would sit on the dock and wait for the fish to bite.
- When I actually did catch a fish I would scream for my dad, and would proceed to make him take the fish out of the water, off my pole, and I would cry until he threw the fish back into the water.
- Then I would start over, put another worm on my hook, and sit on the dock and wait. I liked the action of sitting and waiting and didn't know what to do once I actually caught the fish.

In our Scripture for today, Jesus a carpenter by trade, took seasoned fisherman on a fishing trip. He encouraged them to take their boats into the deep, uncharted water and cast their nets there instead of fishing in the shallow end where they could see exactly what they were looking for.

Jesus taught these disciples, Simon Peter, James, and John, that fishing was not a passive pastime, but an active journey.

This morning God calls us to Christian discipleship. In our Old Testament lesson we hear the call of Isaiah. Isaiah did not think he was worthy to be a prophet for God, so a seraph cleansed his mouth with a hot coal and he was purified. Isaiah is where we find the words in the famous hymn, "Here I am Lord," because the Lord calls him and he says, "Here am I, send me!"

Then in the New Testament we hear the calling of the disciples. Jesus meets these simple fisherman where they are and calls them to come and help him fish for people. The craziest thing happens: they actually do stop what they are doing and follow Jesus.

This morning we learn together that fishing for people is a lifelong journey it is not a one-time event.

God calls us to put our faith into action so that we can cast our own nets of faith into the world.

This passage shows us how Christ equips us to answer God's calling on our lives.

- God does not just call some people and not others, **God calls all of us to do God's work**
 - This passage shows how Christ was actively seeking the disciples
 - He climbed in Simon's boat and asked him to pull away from the shore
 - Then he sat down and taught the crowds from this boat teaching the disciples to meet people where they are
 - After he taught the crowds he encouraged the disciples to get out of their comfort zone
 - He told them to push out into the deep water and let their nets down

This may have been out of the disciples' comfort zone because deep water is scary

- Unchartered, isolated, choppy, dark blue
- Going out into the deep water meant that they had to trust the person who was taking them there

So in order to equip the disciples, Christ asked them to use 2 things in the deep water:

- Nets
- Faith

Nets

- Fisherman spent a lot of time taking care of their nets because with these nets they earned their livelihood
- The fact they were washing the nets at the beginning of this passage probably meant that they were done for the day
- Jesus called them to try again
- Jesus taught the disciples to use something ordinary to go deeper and further than they had gone before
- Jesus took the ordinary and made it something extraordinary, which is what God does for us every day.

The disciples had been fishing all night long...

- You can almost hear the annoyance in Simon's voice when he says, "Master we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so I will let down the nets.

Jesus took these simple nets and performed a miracle.

- In the deep water Jesus asked the disciples to cast their nets again and like the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 the nets were filled with fish...
- so much so that another boat had to come to gather all the fish...then both boats almost sank from the weight of the fish

Casting the nets in the deep water took faith from the disciples

Faith

- the faith to keep going since they had not caught any fish the night before
- faith to go into the deep water
- faith that Christ would keep them safe on this journey
 - Christ said, "Do not be afraid!"
- And at the end they had to have the faith to leave everything behind and follow Jesus

What are the things that stop us from putting our faith in God?

What causes us to stay in the shallow water and not venture into the deep waters of faith?

What are the nets in our lives that entangle us so that we cannot move forward on our faith journey?

~ Our Scripture for today shows us 2 things that stop us from having faith in Christ... fear and pride

- Fear stops us from having faith in Christ
 - In our commercial society we are afraid to put our faith in something that has no tangible guarantee

- We are afraid to venture out into the deep waters for God because we have fear of the unknown
 - What will happen because we are Christian
 - What is at stake, what do we have to give up, what will we have to sacrifice?
- It was out of fear, out of not being able to understand the miracle of the fish that Simon Peter cried out, “Go, away from me Lord for I am a sinful man!”
- Simon Peter, like us was afraid to accept the gift that Christ offers us
- Pride stops us from having faith in Christ
 - We are comfortable with the way we are living and we think that it is the RIGHT way
 - The disciples had been fishing all night and although they were not satisfied with their catch, they did not venture out to the deep waters to fish because their way had worked for them before so why change?
 - We are afraid of change and what it may require of us

So with the barriers of fear and pride how did the disciples go from cleaning their nets to dropping everything and following Jesus?

With their faith that Christ equips them with, they are able to cast their nets, and go out into the world to make fishers of people!

How can we as a church cast our nets of faith?

- By putting our faith into action!
 - Junior Church volunteers!
 - Helping with the upcoming 3 Emergent Worship Experiences
 - Volunteering with Port
 - Helping with Youth Group
 - Ushering
 - Making health kits for Haiti!
- Getting involved with the Stewardship of Prayer and Witness
 - Strengthen your Prayer Life through reading the Scriptures and praying
 - Fill out a prayer request card

- Come to a prayer and praise service during Lent
 - Feb. 23-March 24 in the Sanctuary, 3 opportunities a week
 - Tues 6:30pm, Weds 7am and 12:15pm
 - Go to a Lenten Bible Study (2 options for adults, 1 for children) and re-center your Spiritual life
- Witness
 - Tell a friend or family member about Christ, invite them to come to church with you!
 - Fran plan: Pray for people you know during Lent

~ There are so many opportunities for us as a church family to strengthen our faith together so that we can go out into the world and make Disciples of Christ!

I invite you to get involved and try something new! It may feel like you are going out into deep water, but you may be surprised by what God reveals to you and how you grow in your faith.

In the Early Church the figure of a fish “took on symbolic value as the sign of belonging to Christ, the sign of a Christian.”¹ Today God charges us to make fishers of people! Instead of staying stagnant in our Christianity, God invites us to move forward with Christ by sustaining us with the Holy Spirit. The good news is we have already been caught by Christ.

Instead of working against the nets that entrap us caused by fear and pride, God calls us to be caught up in the wonderfully terrifying salvation story, and calls us to cast our nets of faith into the world. Here we are Lord, send us! In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ (Harper Collin Bible Dictionary, Paul Achtemeir, Harper Collins Publishers Inc. New York, New York, 1985, p. 340).