

The 5th Sunday after Epiphany: Holy Trinity Church: February 6, 2022

Luke 5: 1-11: The Calling of the First Disciples & Deep Water

Preached

By

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

A study was completed before the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A lot of companies cut their workforce, and the remaining employees worked longer hours to compensate. Also, many people began working from home, which made it harder to leave work at work. The result: working unpaid overtime. We all know that the U.S. is the nation of “rise and grind.” Hard work is in our DNA. But so is being tired. We complain about how busy and tired we are. We compare our busy schedules and shrug our shoulders. “Oh well, that’s just how life is. What can you do about it?”

Everybody feels tired. I think that is normal. It’s a hazard of modern life. You and I are not against hard work. We thank God for the opportunity to work, and to use the skills and energy God gives us to make a difference in the world. I’m sure you feel the same way. But most of us also understand that

sometimes our work can be un-fulfilling. When we give our best efforts to something and we don't see any results, we lose heart. That tired feeling isn't just bone-deep. It is spirit-deep, as well.

Sometimes the tiredness runs spirit-deep. And that fatigue steals away our joy, our peace, and our hope. That's not what God intended for our lives. Our God is a creative God, and God made us for peace, and for hope and for joy. So, that spirit-deep fatigue, poisons the life that God intended for us to have energy. That's why we can relate to Simon Peter and the other disciples in our Gospel proclaimed of Luke for today. Crowds of people have come to the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret to hear Jesus preach.

On the edge of the lake are the fishing boats that have come in after a long night's work. Professional fishermen in Jesus' day lowered large nets into the lake. In the dark of night, the fish couldn't see the nets, so schools of fish were easier to catch at night. Unfortunately, Simon Peter and his fishermen had an unsuccessful night. Jesus climbed into Simon's boat and asked him to float out a short distance from shore. After Jesus finished teaching the people on the shore, Jesus told Peter, put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, going deep is not something most people feel comfortable doing. But the process of going “deep” captures the essence of both knowledge of self and knowledge of God. In other words, your truth. You cannot hover on the surface of things and expect to be rewarded with insight. If you don’t allow yourself to go “deep” in your relationships, you may have many acquaintances, but you will have few true friends, and doubtful a true partner. If you don’t allow yourself to go “deep” in anything that interests you, you will never truly become immersed in the joy of any kind of activity. Whether it be music, sports, dancing, a hobby, going “deep” allows you to truly embrace the experience, to embody it, and make it as your own, and to make it part of who you are, in other words, your core identity.

Just, think about how you introduce yourself. Most people, at least in their working years, introduce themselves according to their profession or career. Why? Because they’ve gone deep into what they do. What they do for a living is more than just a job. It becomes a significant part of our core identity. If you don’t like your job, you may introduce yourself differently. Maybe your core identity lies in being a mom or a dad, or a soccer coach, or a mentor, or a church member. The ways you are willing to go “deep” will also define you. In the scriptures, in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, we find multiple

metaphors for “going deep.” Just, think about the painful and tortuous walking and arriving and then going through the Red Sea to escape the Egyptians. That long hard slog through the Jordan to reach the Promised Land. Think about, the journey through the waters on Noah’s Ark to be part of a new beginning. How about, Jonah’s deep-sea adventure in the belly of a whale before doing God’s will. Consider, Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at the waters of Jacob’s well. Jacob’s wrestling with God before he could cross the river to reunite with Esau. Jesus’ own baptism, as well as our Baptism.

In fact, today’s reading from Luke’s Gospel continues that theme. Jesus is standing beside the Sea of Galilee, otherwise known as the Lake of Gennesaret. The crowd was growing so large, Jesus barely had a place to stand. Two boats are sitting by the lake. Jesus boarded one of Simon Peter’s boats and spoke to the crowds from the water. Now comes the interesting part. After he had taught the crowd, he turned to Simon Peter and told him to “row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch.” Talk about an interesting metaphor! Large crowd – Large catch. Jesus’ teaching and message to the crowds and going deeper into Discipleship for the few.

My sisters and brothers, I always like to call Jesus the “Master of the Teachable Moment.” And indeed, he is. He never just tells the disciples anything. He always shows them in some way. This day, 2,000 years ago, is no different. When the disciples dropped their nets into the “deep water,” the catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. Jesus’ punchline: “From now on, you will be fishing for people.” In other words, the only way you are going to do the kind of ministry that will be abundant for Jesus mission is to first “go deep.” It’s not enough to be a good “net-worker.” It’s not enough to be a good fisherman. It’s not even enough to have a sturdy boat. The only way you’re going to be successful is to first “go deep” in the presence and power of Jesus. You cannot have a close relationship with someone if you don’t allow yourself to “go deep” and dive into that place of intimacy and authenticity with someone that a close relationship requires. For example, you can’t reach audiences as a singer or a song writer, if you can’t first allow yourself to “go deep” into that place inside in which you can channel your emotions, and even your pain, and bring them to the surface in the form of art. You cannot heal your past unless you are willing to “go deep” and examine the hurts face-to-face that are haunting your Holy Spirit.

You can’t be an effective disciple unless you allow yourself to “go deep” into your relationship with God, your relationship with Jesus. We avoid going

deep, because “going deep” demands something from us and that is our energy and our vulnerability. It requires us to open ourselves up to God in all our sin and our pain. It requires us to not only look at ourselves in ways that are honest and true, but to show ourselves to God, even the parts of us we would rather hide.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, to be a true disciple of Jesus, we need to reveal ourselves completely, and go “all in.” Uncomfortable? You betcha! Scary? For sure. But what does Jesus say to them before he tells them what they would be doing from now on? “Don’t be afraid.” There’s a reason, Jesus starts his sentences with those exact words. “Be not afraid.”

Jesus knows how hard it is to follow Him, to take up his mission as our own. Jesus knows how demanding and grueling true discipleship can be on those days, when there is no success, when those times the waves are rough, and your boat is rocking, and the sky is dark and ominous. There are times when your boat grounds and punches a hole and takes on water or the nets torn. But, Jesus also knows that going “deep” will result in a vast harvest for God, and a huge “win” for Jesus’ mission in this world. Those people on the shores of Lake Gennesaret listening to Jesus were hungry. They were hungry for the good news, for insight, and for hope. But they would need help learning how

to be disciples, in going from listener to follower. They would need help going deep.

It's no wonder the sign of Jesus the Christ was given the Greek ichthys, the fish. The early Christians scratched the sign of the fish in the dirt in the early Christian gatherings. The sign for those early Christians were risking their lives for the sake of the gospel, and those who would be devoted to bringing others home to Jesus. They would be the brave, the daring, the "fishers of people," the ones with the heart and the courage, not just to go out, but to go out deep, such as those who could be rounded up and persecuted and executed.

So, today my brothers and sisters, this weekend, I invite you too to "go deep" with Jesus to come to the table ready to immerse yourselves in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist of the Savior of the world, to say "yes" to his call to go "deep" in relationship with him, to say "yes" to his command to wade into the waters of the world in order to save the floundering and the lost. Just remember, it only takes a few to rescue many.

When that moment Peter opens himself up to Jesus, Peter is so ashamed of his doubts that he falls at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." But Jesus didn't do this to shame Peter. He did it to share with

Peter a new vision for his life. Jesus says to Simon Peter, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”

Jesus is talking to you and to me, as well as, Simon Peter. Don’t be afraid, he says to us, from now on you will fish for people. Whatever work you are doing, whatever hobbies you have, wherever you find yourself, your primary purpose now is to bring people to God. Your primary purpose in your home, in your workplace, in your school, in your hobbies, in your passions, in your relationships is to share the love and truth of Jesus Christ with others. That’s the new vision God has for your life.

Dare mighty things! That’s what Jesus is saying to Simon Peter and all of us. Is it possible that your tired spirit is a result of not committing your *whole* life to Jesus’ Lordship? Your successes, your failures, your strengths, your weaknesses, your doubts, your security, your future, your identity, are you still wrestling over committing everything to Jesus’ plans and purposes? Because when you commit your entire life to Jesus Christ, you are also trusting Jesus with the results of your life. He is offering to work through you to change lives with his power and his message and his love. This is the beauty part, you don’t have to do the work alone. No Christian is no lone ranger.

Jesus sends us out two by two. We celebrate the Holy Eucharist with at least

two. That is a sure antidote for a tired spirit. Jesus will work through you to bring others to God. Leave the results to Him.

So, my sisters and brothers, here is the challenge for this week. When you become tired, discouraged or filled with doubt about whether or not your efforts are making any difference, please remember this: Jesus' disciples faced harassment, rejection, imprisonment, beatings and death for their work. But they also convinced thousands of people that Jesus is Lord and Savior for all humankind. Christians planted churches all over the Roman Empire, into Africa and Arabia. Today, over billions of people from every race and nation call themselves Christians, and there are Christian churches in every corner of the world. And you and I are here today because of the work of Simon Peter, Paul, and the other apostles and disciples who committed their work and their lives to the message and ministry of Jesus Christ. Now it's our turn. So, commit your life to Jesus and see how he can give you a new sense of vitality and use you to make a difference in this world. AMEN.