

“Follow and Fish”
C Epiphany Five; Scout Sunday; Luke 5:1-11
February 10, 2019; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

Push Out into Deep Water

5 ¹⁻³ 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.

⁴ When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.”

⁵⁻⁷ 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.

⁸⁻¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ 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.

I. A FISH STORY

Quite a story we’ve got here today. A “Fish Story,” if you will. One usually thinks of a “fish story” or tale as one where the details are all quite *exaggerated*.

“It was **THIS** long and **THIS** big, and **THIS** strong, and I had to risk life and limb in order to wrestle it in after I got it on the hook! I fought that puppy for hours – human against beast. Oh, and that first one – the *really* huge one – well, he got away! Yep, sure did.

But then, I got the second one, and it was huge too—biggest fish you’ve *ever* seen—but I forgot my camera and had no way to prove it, and my friends had all headed back to camp, and well...you’ll have to take my word for it!

Fish stories. How often they come with exaggerated details. When those of us who are preachers are taught to engage with scripture stories, so that we can talk about them in a sermon or message or homily, or

whatever you want to call it, one of the pieces of advice is to: “*hug* the details.” (Not “hug the fish! If you were dozing off you might have thought I said that!”)

Hug the details --not necessarily exaggerate them like a fish story, but pay attention to what jumps out and sticks with you in the biblical story.

This story has so many details to delve-into – so many things that jump out—like a fish flapping out of the water at the end of a line—that we could be here all day!

But we won’t – don’t worry! We will just look at a few of the “details that jump” and ask ourselves: *What is it we’re to learn about following and fishing* from this quirky little scripture tale?

II. WHOSE BOAT IS IT ANYWAY?!

The first thing I noticed –that I’m not sure I had before, and this *amused* me – was this “squatter’s rights” moment that happens. Did you catch that?! Jesus just plops himself down in one of their boats! He doesn’t say, “Hey guys! Catchin’ any?!” Hope you’re having a successful day. I just wondered if it would be okay to use your boat for a bit.”

Nope. Jesus just picks one of the two empty boats and invites himself on in! Squatter’s rights?

III. PETER JUST PUTS IT OUT THERE

And then! As if butting into their work vehicles wasn’t

enough, Jesus gets a tad on the bossy side and says, “Well, if I’m gonna use this boat of yours for preaching, I’m gonna need a microphone, or a stage or something. Oh wait! Maybe just pushing out a little ways will solve that problem.

“Hey Pete! Give us a nudge here, will ya?”

And Peter does it! He puts it out there, at Jesus’ request! And that right there shows us a whole bunch about Simon Peter right there at the very start of this this whole adventure with Jesus.

Simon Peter’s gravestone probably should have said, “*Peter puts it out there!*” Whether we’re talking about a boat going out to deeper water. Or a blurt out of his mouth that *gets* him in deep water! Or that unfortunate cutting off the ear of the high priest’s soldier incident.....But that’s Peter. Peter puts it out there!

IV. WHAT IS IT ABOUT JESUS?

And, in that moment, we see a lot about not just Peter, but Jesus too. What *is* it about Jesus of Nazareth, this hometown boy, that was *so compelling*, so “out there” but so down to earth, too, that they thought nothing of him plopping down in one of their boats while they were busy (and tired!) cleaning their nets.

And then, they thought nothing of dropping what they were doing to push him out a little deeper so that he could carry on his calling—this teaching and preaching the good news that he was about?

Remember a couple weeks ago when Jesus had gone into the synagogue and unrolled the scroll of Isaiah and read of the Spirit of the Lord being upon him and calling him?

What did the crowd say at first dash?
“He speaks with such authority.”

That’s the next thing that “jumps out” in this story is that they respond! To *something* in Jesus’ being –his tone of voice, body-language, spirit, all of the above? Seemingly without giving it a second thought, they hop-to; although Peter *does* argue for his limitations for awhile first. His own limitations and the situation’s.

Yep, “*there’s something about Jesus.*” And those arguments they come up with soon fade when they realize who they’re dealing with.

Marcus BORG says this “spirit of authority” was a holy thing.

“Jesus’ hearers “were astounded at this teaching, for he taught them as one having *authority*,” and not as the scribes” (1.22). Behind the Greek word for “authority” lies the Jewish term for the very **power of God**, *Gevurah*.” Jesus spoke from the mouth of the *Gevurah*, that is, from the mouth of the Spirit. Jesus himself claimed an authority grounded in the Spirit.

V. WHAT KIND OF AUTHORITY?

What kind of authority do we encounter in people around *us*? Whom do we give authority *to* in our lives? Is it true and sincere, or is it “fake news?” Yes, in this story there is “something about Jesus” for us to learn. To pay close attention to—so we can compare and contrast.

We will have many times in our lives when someone or something calls to us to do something, try a new adventure or approach, and we will have to give it or them the “Something about Jesus test” and I think that looks a lot like the ‘Scout test.’

A Scout is:

- Trustworthy,
- Loyal,
- Helpful,
- Friendly,
- Courteous,
- Kind,
- Obedient,
- Cheerful,
- Thrifty,
- Brave,
- Clean,
- and Reverent.

And then, the tough question that comes: what do you do when people around you—especially in positions of respect or leadership, are *not* showing those qualities? We are in the midst here of wonderful leaders – scout leaders, church leaders and leaders in our

community, who are outstanding –who are all good scouts at heart –show all those qualities.

But, all of us will encounter people and causes and missions that call to us to follow, who may claim to “speak with authority” even God’s Gevurah or Holy Spirit, but they are *not* authentic. How do you tell the difference, discern the spirits?

That’s a life challenge for us all—no matter what age or stage. I used to tell Rocky (and still do): Rise above it! If authorities are acting without authenticity and integrity, then your job is to show them how it’s done. Take the high road, and *you* model and act with all those scout laws and show them what it looks like and how it ought to be. *Even* if you’re the kid and they’re supposed to be the adult! *Be* the authenticity and integrity you wish to see in the world!

That’s what you’re called to as scouts and we are *all* called to as followers of Christ and children of God.

V. DO NOT BE AFRAID

Finally, the story ends with one last “fish jump.” Trivia question! What’s one of the top five messages in the Bible that’s included in this story? One that’s in there 120 times? Anyone have a guess? Merit badge if you get this!

Do.Not.Fear.

120 times in the bible! Yep, that’s a lot!

Peter was not at his best. He isn’t told to try harder, but to “let go let God.” Go deeper, reach a little farther out – in trust – in the midst of his exhaustion and frustration. And amazing things happen! More fish than they can even handle come pouring into their nets, threatening to break everything in their nets and their world apart!

And then, Peter is not chided for not being perfectly successful the *first* time. He’s *not* told, “If you were just a better fisherman this would happen every time!”

What he *is* told is, Hey! You’ve got this! What’s this business about “too much holiness for you”?!” Not even possible. You ain’t seen nothing yet!

And, by the way – **Don’t be afraid!** I’ve got you. We’ll do this fishing thing *together*. And what’s more—it’ll *be more* of a crazy adventure than you’ve even imagined!

Epperly:

“God can come to us, as Christ did to Peter, in our failures as well as our successes. Not expecting anything, and disappointed over an unsuccessful night’s fishing, Peter is welcomed into a world of wonders. Jesus calls him to go further and despite his doubts, Peter follows Jesus’ advice and receives “more than he can ask or imagine.”

Mercy Me has a song: “Greater Is He”
I had literally just gotten into the car and started

driving back from the conference in Denver, and thought: I'm going to think and pray about this sermon while I drive.

And this came on the radio:

Every day I wrestle with the voices
That keep telling me I'm not right, But that's alright
'Cause I hear a voice and He calls me redeemed
When others say I'll never be enough
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world

Bring your doubts
And bring your fears
Bring your hurt
And bring your tears
There'll be no condemnation here
You are holy, righteous and redeemed

'Cause I hear a voice and He calls me redeemed
When others say I'll never be enough
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world

VI. WILL YOU FOLLOW?

At some point in every one of our lives, someone or some thing comes along, while we're working or schooling or playing, or cleaning our nets. Comes and interrupts us –maybe even squats right down and takes a seat in the midst of our lives, and calls to us. Invites us to drop those nets, go out into deeper waters, stretch a little further, trust more and try again.

Some force compels us to jump in the game, hike the trail, plunge into the lake, and follow. To embark on a holy, exciting and sometimes fearful adventure. Calls us to overcome our own insecurities and sense of unworthiness and trust that the One who calls can be trusted. That we are enough – just as we are—and we are called.

Kate Matthews describes what happens here in this story: “in their encounter with Jesus they become keenly aware that life holds much more possibility than simply fishing for fish.”

Where do our lives and ministries hold *much* more possibility than simply fishing for fish?

What's your fish story? What are you fishing for with your life? Who do you turn to when the going gets tough? Or when the tough get going, and you're feeling inadequate, left behind, totally unsure of yourself?

How do you know which call to follow? Whose call?

"Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore"

Cesáreo Gabaráin

*Lord, you have come to the lakeshore
looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones;
you only ask me to follow humbly.
O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me,
and while smiling have spoken my name;
now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me;
by your side I will seek other seas. **

May we answer the call on our lives with faith, courage and reverence, knowing that the One who

calls is faithful and can be trusted. That we will not be let down or left alone--for greater and true is the Spirit who loves us and calls us than any doubts, fears or limitations we might conjure up.

We might lack faith, but God is *always* faithful! Amen.