

C Lectionary 5 2.9.25

Luke 5:1-11

Focus Statement: Jesus calls us

“When they have brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.”

They left everything and followed Jesus. Everything! This is such a move of incredible courage, to leave everything you’ve ever known behind and head in a different direction.

Mary and I spoke in Bible study, what must Jesus have looked and sounded like to inspire such devotion. Was he so compelling he just glowed? Was his voice hypnotic? What was it about Jesus to inspire such courage?

And what about these men that Jesus called? What made them stand out from the crowd that Jesus called to come with him? Did he know they would make good disciples? Did they have incredible strength or wisdom? Did they seem more gullible than the average Judean? Why them, why these guys? With all these questions swirling around, let’s take a closer look at the text and see what it tells us about who Jesus calls, and how that call happens?

In just one chapter of preaching, teaching, and healing, Jesus had already developed quite a following. Now in chapter five, he started to add more workers to the harvest. We meet Jesus standing on the shore of the Sea of Gennesaret, so surrounded by people that he could barely move. In order to be heard, Jesus got in the boat of a group of fishermen who were cleaning their nets after a completely unsuccessful night of fishing. That’s the first thing that always catches me about this story, the men Jesus called to fish for people were, at least on that particular night, not even successful fishermen. Jesus didn’t go out to the best and

most famous fishermen, he just found the guys who were nearby, because they hadn't caught any fish.

Then, after finishing his sermon, he told them, "put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And you can almost hear in Simon's response, I mean, we've not exactly been successful tonight, but we are at least fishermen, and you are a random wandering preacher, so I think we know a thing or two more than you about fishing, but sure, "if you say so, I will let down the nets." And when they did, there was a miraculous catch of fish. So many that they called a second boat, and both boats began to sink from the quantity. And Simon, like Isaiah in our first reading, was like, oh man, I have seen a thing here that is divine and powerful, and I just don't know about that. "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" It wasn't that Simon had anything specific to repent for, he was just aware that he was in the presence of the holy. But Jesus wasn't concerned about Simon's failures as a fisherman, his sense of his own inadequacy, even the mistakes awaiting Simon's future that Jesus certainly knew would happen. Jesus instead said to Simon, "'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him."

They left everything, but at the same time, they didn't. They were fishermen, and Jesus called them still to be fishermen, just in a different way. That's one thing about leaving everything, I think. Is that it's actually impossible to leave behind everything. Parts of who we are, the lessons we've learned, the challenges we've faced, the struggles we've overcome, all these things come with us.

The other thing I thought about when reflecting on this text is that, all of us are called, have been called, numerous times, to leave everything and follow Jesus. I think we often sell ourselves short, comparing us to this story of few details when we think of the risks we've taken in our own lives. New jobs, new relationships, having children, having grandchildren, moving to a new location, coming to a new church for the first time. All these are transitions where we had to let go of who we were to move in a new direction. Hard things too, saying good-bye to someone who is dying, ending a relationship that is broken, facing a hard diagnosis, all are things that thrust us into new realities. And we go, kicking and screaming and unwilling maybe, but the disciples had their moments, but we go.

Simon, James, and John followed Jesus to become fishers of people, because they had first been caught by Jesus. Three ordinary, simple fishermen, doing the work they'd always done, transformed to do that same old work in a whole new way. Dear people of God, what the calling of the first disciples tells us, reminds us, is first and foremost that Jesus calls ordinary people. Not great kings or princes, people of great power or wisdom or skill. The thing that Simon, James, and John had wasn't that they were perfect, it was that they were available. The calling of the first disciples reminds us that the prophets and true leaders aren't gone, they are us. We are the ones Jesus is calling to make a difference in our own networks using the skills and gifts we already have in new ways. God isn't waiting until the right person with the perfect skills, gifts, financial level, connections to power, whatever, shows up. God has always worked through the people who are around, for what matters is

not who we are but what God can do in us. Dear people of God each of us are called into the work of bringing about the kingdom, because we are the ones who are here. So don't wait, dear people, for someone else to show up. Don't wait, and don't worry. Just because it hasn't worked the way you might have thought, doesn't mean it isn't working. Simon, James, and John fished all night, until Jesus called them to deeper waters, and then out of the water entirely, to bring about the work of the kingdom. You are called, dear people, to the work of God. Trust in that promise. Thanks be to God. Amen.