

Luke 5:1-11  
February 6, 2022

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen.

Shortly before Jim Peak's death a couple of weeks ago, he and I had a conversation about roller skating, which Jim enjoyed in his younger days. As we reminisced with one another, we concluded roller skating, in many ways, could be used as a metaphor for life with its ups and downs, straight ways of smoother sailing and corners that it's all too easy to veer out of control. There's the joy of rolling along to the music and the frustration and even pain upon losing one's balance and tumbling to the ground. Sometimes an injury such as twisted ankle puts us on the sidelines. Yet, other times it's simply the avoidance of one more spill that sends us to take off our skates and say, "What's the point? I'm tired. I'm frustrated."

Simon (aka Peter) appears to have been thinking the same thing as he tells Jesus, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing." These anglers had to be tired, frustrated, and ready to go home. It might have seemed pointless when Jesus told them to put out into the deep water and yet again let down their nets.

Readers of the gospel may at times perceive Simon unfairly in that he doesn't seem to understand, follow Jesus' teachings, or continues to remain oblivious to who Jesus is even after having a front row seat to miracle upon miracle Jesus performs. Yet, Peter often gets it right.

Rather than giving in and going home, throwing in the towel on a long night of fishing that hadn't produced any fruits of their labors, Peter does hear Jesus and heeds his command to put out into the deep waters to throw out the nets once again. In so doing, he and the others experience the abundance of God's providence. They are witness to the inbreaking of the kingdom Jesus is ushering. Amidst their ordinary lives, their boats dirtied from a night of fishing, the sweat dripping from their brow of casting their nets into the sea only to come up empty, they catch a glimpse into who Jesus is.

Pastor Hougen reminded our small group that meets every Monday of a quote from Babe Ruth, "Don't let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." Just imagine if Ruth gave into the fear of striking out. What he would have missed? The comradery with his teammates and interactions with his admiring fans. The thrill of one more ball exploding from his bat, clearing the outfield fence, and finding the glove of a youngster in the stands. Imagine what the fans of baseball would have missed?

When we give into our own fears of fishing for people, what opportunities and experiences are we, Christ's church, missing? When we give into the tempter's lies that tell us, like they did

Peter, we're not deserving enough to be in the boat with Jesus, what do we miss? When abandon ship, or set sail for deeper waters alone in our own vessels, what is it we might not experience? When we are tired and say, "Master, we have worked all night long and have caught nothing" and simply don't see the point of throwing our nets out one more time, what might we miss out on?

We miss the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. We miss the joy of being in the boat with Jesus and growing into a fuller relationship with him. We miss being present for an epiphany of the abundance only God can provide. We miss participating in kingdom work. We miss the opportunity for new relationships or the opportunity to reconcile a broken relationship. We miss the comradery and fellowship with our fellow anglers. We miss one more swing of the bat that might result in a base hit or home run. We miss one more loop around the rink with Jesus in which we experience the rush of adrenaline pumping through our veins and the joy of making it without falling.

What if Luke had told us there was one fisher that decided he'd had enough and went home following a long night of fishing on the lake of Gennesaret? Just think about what that weary soul would have missed. An encounter with the divine. A miracle of abundance. The joy of a catch that would feed the community. The excitement, energy, and endorphin rush to renew, restore, and spark life into a once weary body spent physically, mentally, and even spiritually.

In so many ways, the boat the church finds itself in has been sailing through deep waters these past two years. There's been more than enough chaos. One too many night of fishing resulting in exhaustion and asking the question if it's worth it? The church has had to rethink the process of casting the nets Jesus equips us with and we are still trying to figure it out. How do we fish together when we aren't all gathered in this place...this boat? How do we fish for people when so many see the church as irrelevant to their lives?

How do we cast our nets upon the swirling waters of anger, spite-filled words, and uncompromising agendas that threatens to leap over the edge of the boat and disrupt, permeate, and even capsize the mission Jesus invites us in to?

It's far too easy to take off the skates or go be an observer in the dugout or even the stands. We can return home, rest comfortably in our own beds, never to return to the work the Master has called, gathered, and sent us to do. That would be simpler.

This kingdom work, Jesus work, isn't easy. It is tiring at times. Frustrating. It is challenging casting our nets with those we may not always want to hold the same net with. This work does bring us face to face with peril and at times fear.

Yet, we must recall Jesus got in the boat. He could have simply walked upon the waters to go out a bit and teach the crowds. But he didn't. He got in the boat with Simon and asked him to put out a little ways from the shore. He got in the boat and taught. He got in the boat and told them to venture into the deep waters and cast their nets. He got in the boat and provided for their needs. He got in the boat and opened their eyes. He got in the boat, and he is in the boat yet today.

The harvest is plentiful, and we are called to not bring it alone. It took more than one boat. It took the whole crew of those experienced anglers. It takes a church, Christ's church. He climbs in the boat yet today and asks us the same question he did Simon, "Will you go out a little way from the shore?"