

Go Deeper

Isaiah 6:1-8

Luke 5:1-11

2/10/2019

Opening

- Since the first of the year, we've been on a journey, examining our new mission statement.
 - o Say it with me, will you? It's "Loving God, Loving Neighbor and living with purpose."
- On this journey, we are exploring what it means to live with purpose.
 - o As followers of Jesus we understand that living with purpose means to become more like him.
 - To do what he did- follow his teachings- and to live life as he lived.
 - o Between now and Easter, we're journeying through readings from the lectionary which explore this idea of living with purpose.
 - o Today, we are examining a story from the Gospel of Luke chapter 5- it's a fishing story.
 - o I am a recreational fisherman- I enjoy fishing- I find it relaxing to be near the lake, with a line in the water.
- Everything I learned about fishing, I learned from my grandfather, Clarence Winston.
 - o As a young boy, grandfather Winston frequently would come and pick up my brothers and I and take us fishing.
 - o My grandfather loved to fish and he love his grandkids and so the two just naturally went together.
 - o Not only did my grandfather love to fish, he knew a lot about it and he was very good at it.
 - o He knew how to find them and how to catch them.
 - o Finding and catching fish isn't exactly easy you know.
 - No doubt we all are taught that fish travel together in clusters, known as "schools".
 - The large majority of fish live together in a very small area of the water, creating vast expansive areas of water, where there are no fish.
 - My grandfather taught his boys that if you found a spot where you caught several fish right away, there was a good chance that you would catch many more.
 - Correspondingly, he understood too that if you had been in a fishing spot for a while without catching anything, it was time to move onto another spot to find the fish.

- When we went fishing with my grandfather, he generally knew all of the good spots and he would take us from spot-to-spot-to-spot until the fish started to bite.
 - He also taught us that if you wanted to catch a fish, you needed to be patient for the fish to start biting.
 - Young boys aren't always the most patient sort and it was common that if the fish didn't start biting immediately, my brothers would reel in and recast our fish hook from place, to place, to place, in an effort to find that magical spot in the water, where the fish would instantly "take the bait.
 - And one of my most vivid memories from those times is my grandfather saying "if you want to catch a fish, you have to put your line in the water."
 - Because of his fishing acumen, anyone who went fishing with Clarence Winston stood a better than average chance of catching some fish.
- When it came to fishing, Clarence Winston really knew his stuff and I am thankful for the fact that he was willing to share that wisdom with me and I'm grateful for the wonderful fishing stories I now have because of him.

A fishing story- going into the water to preach

- In the Gospel reading from Luke today, we also have a fishing story.
 - The fishermen out on Lake had been unable to find the right spot to find fish, until Jesus came by and had them move to a spot where they would find fish.
 - Jesus is standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, also known as Lake Tiberias or the Sea of Galilee.
 - And a large number of people are there to hear Jesus preach
 - And they begin to crowd in around him, each person wanting to be as close as possible to hear Jesus.
 - Jesus, realizes that he is at the water's edge and he looks along the shoreline and sees two fishing boats.
 - It is apparently the end of their work day and the fishermen are washing and mending their fishing nets, before they go home.
 - Jesus walks over and gets into the boat belonging to Simon and he asks Simon to put the boat out a short distance from the shore.
 - Now, Jesus did this for a couple of reasons.

- For one, he needed some distance between him and the crowd.
 - The people were crowding in around him, pressing closer and closer to him, pushing towards the water’s edge.
 - And the crowd was getting so close that it made it difficult for Jesus to preach to the multitudes.
 - You know, it’s hard to talk to a large crowd, when there is someone directly and closely in front of you.
 - And Jesus want to get back a short distance, so he would a better view of the entire crowd.
- Moving out into the water also made it easier for the crowd to hear Jesus, because the surface water would act as a natural amplifier.
- If you’ve ever spent any time out at a lake, you likely know that sound carries very well across calm water.
 - You can be on one side of the lake and hear people talking, even though they may be clear on the other side of the lake.
- One of the courtesies of camping- at a lake especially- is that at night, you keep the noise down, because the cool air and calm surface of the water amplify any sound you might make, enabling everyone on the lake to hear you.
- Jesus knew that if he moved out a short distance into the water, the crowd of people would actually be able to hear him better.
 - So he asks Simon to take him out in his boat.
 - And Simon does and Jesus preaches to the crowd.

Jesus needs Simon’s (and our) help

- Now, one might ask “Why didn’t Jesus just walk out on to the water and preach?”
 - We know from other stories, that Jesus was able to walk on water, right.
 - So, did he really need Simon’s help?
 - And the answer to that is yes, he did need Simon’s help.
 - Think about it: If Jesus had just walked out on the water to preach, do you think people would have even heard a word he said?
 - Or would they be too occupied talking about this man who floats on the water?
 - Jesus knew that if he were to be heard, he would need to speak from a conventional place.

- And standing on the deck of a boat is about as conventional as it gets, when you're on the water.
- Jesus needs Simon's help to get out onto the water.
 - And Jesus' request reminds us that in bringing God's kingdom to earth, Jesus will ask for our help.

Simon's reluctance

- Once he is done preaching, Jesus decides to take Simon fishing.
 - Jesus says to Simon "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."
 - And Simon answers "Master, we've worked hard all night long, but have caught nothing. Yet, if you say so, I will let down the nets."
 - Jesus knows of a good fishing spot and he wants to share it with Simon
 - And Simon has no idea what is happening.
 - Simon is reluctant- perhaps because he thinks Jesus is joking- or perhaps crazy.
 - Simon and his crew have been out on the water already.
 - They've been dragging their nets all night and caught nothing.
 - They have come in empty handed, discouraged about not catching fish.
 - They have finished washing and mending their nets
 - And now Jesus wants go out into the deep water and fish?
 - Can't you just hear the skepticism in Simon's response.
 - "If you say so," he says.
 - That is tantamount to saying "Alright, fine, if you say so. I think it's a waste of time, but if you insist, I'll do it. We'll go into the deep water and fish."
 - Simon's response to Jesus' call is common.
 - Many times in the Bible, when God calls someone to do something, he or she doesn't want to do what God asks.
 - Remember the story of Moses? Moses was a great leader of Israel and yet in Exodus 3, when God asked Moses to go to Egypt, Moses didn't want to go.
 - God comes to Moses in the burning bush says, "Moses, I need you to go back to Egypt and tell the Pharaoh to free my people".

- And Moses' reaction is similar to Peter's. "Really, me? I can't do that! I can't speak without stuttering."
 - "And like, when I tell them that a burning bush sent me, how do you think that will go over?"
- You start to see Moses and his reluctance to go deeper.
- And in the Old Testament reading from Isaiah, when God commissions Isaiah, he too has an excuse- "I can't do that. I am a man of unclean lips," he says.

Our reluctance

- It's pretty normal for anyone to resist doing something God commands.
- Let's be honest in saying, God can make some pretty outrageous requests which may take us into some VERY deep waters!
 - Most of the time, when you hear that small voice inside calling you, your initial thought is to say "I can't do that."
 - You might have any number of excuses- and that's normal.
- But here's the question you need to answer for yourself:
- After you've put up all of your excuses, do you then do what God asks?
 - Because, God is expecting some resistance- God isn't surprised by excuses.
 - But God also knows that the only way to catch something is to cast out in deep waters.
 - And God just wants to know that in the end, that you'll do what you are asked.
- Simon did- he eventually gets to "yes."
 - He obeyed Jesus and took the boat into deep waters.
 - And as a result of his faithfulness, Simon was blessed with an amazing catch.
 - Nothing like this had ever happened before on that lake- it was a miracle!
 - And through his faithfulness, Simon's life and the lives of James and John were forever changed, when Jesus called to them and said, "come follow me and from now on, you will fish for people."
 - These fishermen did as Jesus commanded and they left everything behind and followed him.

- They simply walked away from their boats, their jobs, everything they'd ever known in life and followed Jesus and became his first disciples.
- So, what does this story have to do with us?
 - For starters in this story we discover that Jesus will not be shy in asking you to commit everything you have to his mission.
 - Just as Jesus asked to borrow Simon's boat, Jesus will ask you to employ everything you own- to advance the Kingdom of God.
 - In this story we also find that it is a normal reaction to resist when God calls us to do something.
 - But in the end, what is important is that you answer yes to God's calling in your life.
 - Lastly, we can take from this story that God wants you and me to Go Deeper.
 - As it was for the Simon, James and John, from time to time, God will ask you to cast your nets into the deep water.
 - God will challenge you and ask you to move in directions which take you out of our comfort zone.
 - Directions which may give you reason to be afraid.
 - Directions which may inconvenience you, or which may cause great change for your life.
- What might going deeper look like for you?
 - Perhaps for you, going deeper is inviting a friend who doesn't have a church home to join this community of faith.
 - Or maybe it's going to visit someone who can't make it to church.
 - Whatever it is for you, you can bet that going deeper means breaking tradition, doing things differently and getting out of your comfort zone.
- But you know what- sometimes, breaking tradition and doing things differently- as uncomfortable as that may be- is the best way to make an impact in God's Kingdom.
- **Cookies- What will people remember 20 years from now.**

Wrap it up

- I don't know where your deep waters reside.
 - I only know that whatever God calls you to, God promises to go with you.
 - So the only question is: are you willing? Are you willing to go deeper?
- As the story in Luke ends, Simon, James and John, leave their boats on the shore- they leave everything behind and follow Jesus.

- Maybe we're not called to leave everything behind and follow Jesus, however, as faithful Christians, God expects our willingness to say to Jesus, "everything I offer to you- my time- my possessions- my abilities- my heart and soul- my life- everything- it's all yours."
 - Are you willing to do that?
 - Are you willing to go deeper?
- Amen