

February 7, 2010
Luke 5: 1-11
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I found it interesting that our scripture this week has us talking about a call to discipleship just days after the joint board met with two members of the conference staff to talk about how to be church in the 21st century. To envision ourselves in the years ahead and how we are the church when so many feel they do not need the church. The joint board agreed to move forward with a process that invites us to go deeper within ourselves to find our niche in today's

Today's lesson from the Bible is not a story of accepting the call of God for some special service; it is not as dramatic a call as Saul who would become Paul received on the road to Damascus with the flashing of bright lights through lightening; it is not like Isaiah's call using incense in the Temple; no this call comes to ordinary people through an ordinary event. It comes in the midst of daily life, while they are doing their daily work. In fact those men who join Jesus out in the water have no idea how their lives are about to change. They only accept an invitation from Jesus to take him into deeper into deeper water.

But teacher, they say, we have been out there all night. We have done this already, we have tried everything we know how to try and our nets are empty. These would be disciples could have been us last Tuesday evening when we heard around the table, we have tried different things; we used to do this, we used to do that...When did we stop? When did we decide that we were as deep as we could go? Why did we stop? These are our questions today. But first lets get back to our fishing story.

I grew up in Kingsville, ON a small town right on Lake Erie. It is home to a number of commercial fishermen. I can remember growing up seeing the men from these boats mending their nets; returning from the deeper waters with their catch of the day. The harbour was a place full of the sights and sounds of commercial fishing and so I can easily picture the men of ancient times along the shore of the lake mending their nets and cleaning up after a long day or in this case night of commercial fishing. We tend to stereotype the men who fish for a living, lots of drinking, trouble makers, sometimes thought of as bums.

I am not saying that Simon was a bum just that stereotypes may have placed Simon in a particular class, one that may have Simon as simply appeasing this Rabbi and not particularly interested in his message. Simon may have seen himself as rescuing the Rabbi from the crowds. Jesus' request to go into deeper water comes later after he has finished his teaching. Simon may not have even been paying that much attention to what Jesus had been telling the crowd. He was tired, he had been working hard all night with nothing to show for it; his attention span may not have been that great. So when Jesus asks to go into deeper water and to have Simon put out his nets it only stands to reason that he would object in some way. "Really

Jesus, I would much rather go home and see the family and get some rest and a bite to eat. Ok, Ok, I'll take you out and prove to you that there are no fish" and once again we see Jesus using the ordinary to invoke a miracle.

Simon is expecting to catch nothing in his nets, again simply appealing the request of the Rabbi when suddenly the water that was empty before Simon encountered Jesus is now full of fish, in fact the nets are so full the weight is almost more than Simons boat can handle and he has to call for help.

And there, in a boat full of fish Simon has an epiphany, an insight, and the first thing he does is deny his worth. How many times have we done that? How many times have we had an epiphany moment and responded with, I'm not worthy! How many times will we reject the miracle in front of our face with our own self-doubt?

Simon has witnessed a miracle and he is overcome with fear and awe and self-doubt and because of this tries to get Jesus to go away from him. **Push Jesus away, that's the answer. Push him away, don't let him in; remind yourself that you are not worthy. That'll work.** Many of us have done that too. Don't come near me Jesus, I'm afraid of your kind of power, I'm not worthy to receive your call. But Jesus persists. Don't be afraid, Jesus says, I know you're scared but instead of going away and leaving Simon there on the shore full of fish, taking Simon's word for it that he is not worthy, Jesus says, "from now on you will be catching people". You will be catching people. You, Simon, will be bringing them into the net and the net will be heavy; full to the brim and overflowing with people who need to hear the good news. Full of people who need to see the miracle, who need to see and become part of the full net of God's love.

This call to Simon was not done in isolation. James and John were also invited to this call. They witnessed the miracle and epiphany of Simon and their lives were changed too. Sometimes the call we receive is not directly through Jesus, sometimes it comes to us through our witness to something else. When we see and acceptance and faith of someone else, someone we know, someone we work with, someone we share an event this whether we know them or not; then we too may get the call.

I was comparing our churches to fishing for people and realized that we work on a catch and release method. The people come to us through our nets and we release them back into their everyday places, renewed and ready to bring others to the net. Our everyday places, this is the work of fishers of people, bringing God to the everyday places. This is the message of this reading in Luke, God meets us in our everyday places. On the shores of a lake, or in the middle of a busy street; in the grocery store, or at the skating rink, these are the everyday places that we go fishing, Perhaps we should hang a sign on our door through the week, "Gone Fishing!"

Amen.

