

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
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 February 7, 2025

Into the Deep Water

Our gospel today is several things at once:
 It's a call story and a miracle story.
 Or maybe it's a call story,
 with a miracle embedded in it.
 A call story,
 but with a miracle as the driving force of the call.
 A call to change, to live differently, to live for something different,
 To direct one's labor and energy and love and belief
 Towards a new thing, a new direction.
 Christianity's term for this is vocation,
 Which in some settings,
 Implies a call to religious or vowed life,
 Or a call to ordination.
 But that's too small of an idea for this term.
 Vocation is from the Latin vocare, which is the verb for "to call."
 Our church defines vocation as,
 "...the "calling" one infers
 from the external and internal signs which evolve over time.
 Vocation may involve a task or job, but it also concerns a way of life...
 That is rooted in the baptismal covenant."

All of us have a calling,
 Or more practically,
 Callings.
 Particular ways that God asks us to love the world,
 Particular ways that we build up the body of Christ.
 Invitations to go out into the deep water
 And say yes.

This story is a deep well,
 And this morning,
 It has some good news about answering our own calls.

One: God knows we probably won't answer the first time.

As I imagined this scene,
 I was moved by the fact that here,
 in Luke's gospel,
 this isn't Simon Peter's first encounter with Jesus.
 Simon knows who Jesus is,

has likely heard him preach,
 has heard people talk about him,
 and has met him.

In fact, Jesus has healed his mother in law.
 So this isn't even the first of Jesus' miracles
 That he's directly witnessed,
 or at least directly impacted by.

I like this, because it matches most of our experience much more closely.

In the life of faith and in our vocations,
 In our experience of callings.

Very rarely do we have a single moment,
 a single encounter -
 even a dramatic one, like a miracle! -
 and completely change...

Or completely change direction.

Often we need time.

Building relationship. Different experiences. Multiple encounters.

Before we hear the call, make the change...

Let ourselves be moved, in all different ways.

**Two: following your calling might mean leaving a good, beautiful thing
 for another good, beautiful thing.**

Sometimes when people talk about their callings,

Their vocational paths,

There's an implication

that the thing that they were before

Or that they were doing before

Was bad, or work that doesn't "make a difference,"
 make an impact.

And yet,

The disciples in this scene push against that narrative:

Because being a fisherman is certainly worthy and necessary labor!

It's important to remember

that these are not people fishing for sport or for fun,

But for their life's work.

in this time and place,

Procuring food was largely a local thing;

If there wasn't fish caught by the fishermen at the lake nearby,

There probably wasn't fish available to bring home for dinner that day.

Simon was doing important, necessary work for his community...

And yet, in his encounter with Jesus,

he's now called to something else.

He allows himself to be moved

By absolute abundance.

Which brings us to

Three: you might leave the old thing, the old way just as it's become wildly successful.

It's in the face of total abundance

in the terms of their old life -

their life as fishermen -

that Peter, James, and John decide to follow Jesus.

Is this Ironic?

Or is how it works?

When we confront true abundance in the world,

when we trust that there is enough and God will provide,

we can hold the things of the world loosely,

Our training, our career trajectory, our past experiences or biases,

our stuff - physical or psychological -

Anything that we cling to thinking,

Falsely,

That we are bound by it.

God, of course,

Is the source of all abundance.

And Jesus providing an extraordinary catch,

is connected here

to the new disciples' willingness to follow and to serve with him.

Simon, James, and John's clear response

To witnessing this plentiful abundance

Is to follow Jesus,

is to serve.

Four: answering a call can involve fear.

In fact, it USUALLY does.

Maybe even a "wow, I'm not worthy" moment.

Peter's first reaction to encountering holiness is fear,

But we hear here -

just like we hear so many times from Jesus -

Do not be afraid.

Our country, our society is in a critical moment.

Powerful people are testing

The balance of power in our government.

All of us, however we identify politically,

Whoever we voted for...

Need to stay awake through this crisis.

All of us, however we identify,

Have work that is ours to do

In this moment.

All of us have a call

That speaks to what our country

And what our communities need right now.

When I consider this,
 When I consider what God might be asking me in this moment,
 Fear is one of the first things that comes up.
 And I feel tremendously comforted
 That I stand in a long line of God's people
 Who felt the same way.

And if we really think about it,
 aren't all call stories miracles?
 Human beings can be so stubborn,
 So resistant to change.
 It is a small, everyday miracle
 For someone to change their life.
 To redirect what they spent their time, energy, and focus on.
 To believe something new,
 And to reorient their world around it.
 (pause)

**Five: Answering a call can look like a small obedience
 that leads to a big obedience.**

Jesus' instruction to Simon is to put out into the deep water.
 Far from the shore,
 far from safety,
 from what's certain.
 I have to assume that -
 As a fisherman -
 Simon had been to the deep water before.
 But never with Jesus.
 This time, we went while trusting
 words that contained -
 As I imagine it, anyway -
 more power
 and more love
 than he can understand.

I was reminded about this following poem a few days ago.
 This is where I want to leave us today.
 Not in a definitive place,
 Or in any certainty about my calling
 Or your calling
 Or our calling
 In this moment,
 But in a place of movement, of openness,
 And even blessing.

blessing the boatsBy [Lucille Clifton](#)

(at St. Mary's)

may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that

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