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“Your God Reaction” **Sermon on Luke 5:1-11**

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When you think about the story of Jesus calling his disciples, what do you see in your mind's eye? I tend to see it happening in the way Mark and Matthew tell the story. “As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” I see it as a calling out of the blue and in instant reaction... “immediately they left their nets and followed him.” (*Mark 1:16-18*) That's the way I see the story going. Luke, however, tells the story this way.

Luke 5:1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” ⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

I don't know why Luke tells the story differently. Do you?

In Luke's Gospel, Simon Peter doesn't come from out from the blue. Simon Peter already knows Jesus. Only a few verses prior to what I just read to you is the story of when Jesus "after teaching in the synagogue... ..entered Simon's house...". Luke writes as if we know who Simon is. We don't know, unless we have read the other gospels. Anyway, "Jesus enters Simon's house" and upon entering is told that Simon's mother-in-law had a high fever. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law, and the only reaction was for her to get up and start cooking dinner.

When I say, "the only reaction," I mean "the only" reaction. There was no celebration of healing! No one asked, "Who is this man? He heals with such authority." I would have liked Simon Peter to have said something, but, then again, she was his mother-in-law. And, I have heard, though I have not experienced it myself, that relationships with in-laws can be... well... let's just say, for some, if they were given a chance to have one miracle in life, healing the mother-in-law would not necessarily bubble up to the top. No reaction! She just gets out the pots and pans and start cooking.

But I think we know, at least, that we can infer from that story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, that the event was not quite enough to call Peter into following Jesus. Peter's reaction was to continue to do what he was doing - fishing with the boys.

Meanwhile, Jesus is beside the sea, and he has his followers. The crowds were pressing in on Jesus "to hear the Word of God." Simon Peter wasn't one of them. He had other things to do. So, what we know about Simon Peter is that he gave no celebration for his mother-in-law's healing, and chose to go fishing over being in church. This is the first of the qualifications to become a saint. Can you believe this?

Well, that's life, isn't it? After all, where do you place hearing the Word of God on your list of things to do? Is it near the top of your list every moment of every day? When your time is limited and there's Zoom call in ten minutes, and the kids have homework and you don't know how to do the "new math" or, for that matter, the "old math," is it near the top? And when you've run out of tries on Wordle? And your friend just tested positive for Covid after having lunch with you? While your insurance keeps billing you for something you already paid, and you can't reach a human being? Press one for English, two for sales, three to take a brief survey and qualify for a gift card... The Word of God is not there.

When in the day-to-day of life are you leaning into the word of God? “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” The Apostle Paul wrote those words before Comcast came into existence. Or maybe Paul would say they’re still true. But living life is probably the biggest thing that gets in the way of us hearing the Word of God.

Luke gives us a crowd who is pressing on Jesus to hear the Word of God. And Luke gives us Simon Peter who isn’t into all that. Maybe it just wasn’t his time to be into all that. Life is like that.

There are people in this world that you and I like to call “C and E” Christians – we call them the Christmas and Easter people. They are the people who make you mad when they’re sitting in your pew on Christmas Eve. They’re the people who take up too much time and space taking family photos outside the Sanctuary at the flowered cross.

But every so often, I have seen a “C and E” Christian occupy a Sunday pew in July. And I know what you’re thinking: “The church has services in July?” We do. What I’m saying is that there, in that sparse crowd, is that one for whom worship is becoming a friend. They’re beginning to have a trend, Sunday after Sunday, and I lick a star and put it in the book. I keep track of you all. Life has taken a turn and now there’s a leaning into the Word of God. The decision to go to worship is most often made on a personal need. Personal need. “I need.” Is that Simon Peter?

Maybe he didn’t lean in because he had to work to make a living. Paying the bills comes first. He had to work on Sunday and that’s that. Maybe he just didn’t fit in with those who were leaning in for the Word. You know, sometimes your life is caught up in things that don’t necessarily fit in with Sunday go-to-meeting clothes. You can dress up, but you’re really just covering up, and underneath it all life doesn’t look like Sunday morning. You can’t even work on something positive; you’re just going backwards. Is that Simon Peter?

Do you see how Jesus invited Peter into leaning in on the Word of God? First of all, he says, “You mind if I get into your boat? We can push off into the shallow water and I can teach these people.” What Jesus teaches the crowds we don’t know. You might think Luke would have wanted to write that down. But, no, he’s more interested in showing us that “the Word of God” isn’t something that comes off the mountain top, dressed in white gown, filled with “thee” and “thou shall not.” The Word of God sometimes wears common work clothes, and says things in a secular way. “You mind if get into your boat?” Faith can start in relationship.

God understands who we are and invites us to something richer and deeper. After teaching the crowds, Jesus turns to Simon Peter and says, “Put out in the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon Peter tells God what he knows about fishing. That’s what fishermen do. Where to fish, when to fish, what’s biting, what’s not, and on what lure. Fishermen know. “Look, Lord, we’ve been fishing all night and have come up empty. Yet if you say so, I’ll do it.” God knows something about fishing, too.

And, nets break, sinking boats filled with fish. The reaction of Peter wasn't "Boy did my ship ever come in today, I just made a killing in the fish market. I'm set for life." No!

His reaction is more like that of Isaiah, in the passage that Heidi read to you. Isaiah is there in temple, and suddenly, of all things, God showed up, and God fills the temple. High and lifted up. God's robe filled the temple. "I could only see the hem of his garment. Six-winged creatures whirled about and sang. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" And what does Isaiah say? "Oh, Lord, woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips." The God reaction.

The God reaction: 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'

Does Luke tell the story differently? Because Luke knows that when it comes to God, none of us measure up. If you replayed your life, this month, this week, how many times did you try to kick Jesus out of your boat? "Look Lord, what I know about you is I'm not you. Get away from me. You don't need me. You're something holy, something other! Just get away."

Whether it is Isaiah, Peter, you, or me, what never changes is God's reaction. "Come on! Come! Come be a part of me."

What we know about Simon Peter is that there will be times when he will walk on water, and times when he will just like that he'll sink. And what's the God reaction? "Come on! Come on! Come be a part of me."

There'll be times with Simon Peter when he'll get it so right, and just like that, Jesus will look at him, ready to exorcise the demon out of him. But then after that, what is it? "Come on, come on."

What we know about Peter is that he makes a vow to never deny Jesus, but then, "I don't know him." "I never met him." "I don't know who you're talking about." And from a cross, and from a tomb, and forevermore, "Come on! Come on! Come be a part of me."

I don't know where you are with Jesus this morning. Whether you're leaning into the Word of God, feel like you don't deserve it, or you tried and failed. But the God reaction, even to how we broke his body and shed his blood, continues to be, "Come on. Let's get into the boat, let's head out to the deep water. And there the richness lies, an amazing catch. Come.