

Epiphany 6, 2022-February 6, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Luke 5:1-11

“Feared and Followed”

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

Throughout these weeks in the season of Epiphany, each week we learn of the ways that Jesus makes himself known to his chosen followers. As this reading you just heard from Luke begins, Jesus is experiencing what every preacher would like to have happen. There is a crowd of people who want to come to hear the word of God. There are other times that the crowd of people who gather around Jesus want him to perform a miracle through a demonstration of his power to heal. But today, no one is pushing through the crowd to get close enough to Jesus for him to heal them or give him a jar of water they want to see turned into wine. Today they just want to get close enough so that they can clearly hear what Jesus has to say. The crowd had grown so great and were pressing in so close to Jesus that he was about to either get wet in the lake of Gennesaret or he would have to walk on the water. But then Jesus noticed two boats that were by the shore which weren't doing anything. In fact, these boats hadn't accomplished anything all day. They were empty now and there weren't any fish to empty from the nets of these boats when they got to shore. All that was left for these fishermen to do was to wash their smelly empty nets so that they would be ready for the next day of fishing. Jesus decided to use a boat as his pulpit to preach from.

After Jesus had finished his teaching in the late evening, the logical next step for most preachers would be to get out of the boat and find a place to rest for the evening. But Jesus wanted to go fishing himself even though the time had passed for good fishing and the owners of the boats, Simon and James and John were also ready to call it a day after not having just a bad day of fishing, but a day where they didn't even catch one fish to split for a small meal.

Simon, James, and John didn't quit fishing that day because they knew Jesus was teaching and preaching that night. They quit fishing because they had failed to catch any fish. The crowd however, had stopped what they were doing to come to listen to Jesus, but the three fishermen kept working on their nets. Maybe they didn't stop to hear Jesus, but Jesus drew close enough to them so that they could overhear what Jesus was saying. While washing their nets, Simon must have overheard Jesus speak with such authority that night that Simon knew that if Jesus said something it wasn't to be questioned. Even though Jesus' request to Simon to cast the nets in deeper water seemed to be a ridiculous idea, Simon did not wait for or ask Jesus to repeat himself. He just let down his net.

What had started as the poorest day of fishing that Simon ever had turned out to be the best day on the water he could ever imagine. The nets were so full that they started to break and then when they got all the fish into the two boats, they both started to sink. What would you do after someone told

you about a secret fishing spot and you had your best day of fishing ever? I suspect there would be plenty of pictures taken. You would likely thank this person for encouraging you to go out one more time. And you certainly would want to mark that spot and try to do it again the next day. But Peter didn't do any of these things. He didn't even ask Jesus if he wanted to split the big catch as a gesture of gratitude. Peter realized that he had not come close to a successful fisherman. Peter knew that the Son of God had come close to him.

Simon felt the same way Isaiah felt when the Lord came close to him. The first response when you know you have come close to the authority and power of God is fear. Isaiah responded, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" Likewise, Simon Peter told the Lord, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

Such a response from people to send the Lord away only makes him draw closer. Not only will he come close to you, but then he will speak words that you need to hear. After Jesus hears a confession of sins, there is nothing else he would rather do than deliver words of forgiveness so that you will forget your past and follow him. A seraph touched Isaiah's mouth and removed his sin and as Simon, James and John were thinking they were about to drown in their sinking fish-filled boats, Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

First Isaiah and Simon feared the Lord and then they followed the Lord. These are not the only two examples in scripture of how fearing Jesus precedes following Jesus. In fact, this is how it always happens in scripture and the way it works for you.

The first thing you did today as our worship began was to do as Peter did when he experienced the power of Jesus, you confessed that you are a sinner. This is not followed by Jesus giving you a plan for self-improvement to follow for the week. Instead, Jesus draws near to you and speaks. Jesus says, "Do not fear. Your sins are forgiven." After hearing these words, we are set free to follow Jesus.

I can almost imagine Jesus with a little smile on his face as his disciples were bringing in the abundance of fish after telling them to let their nets into the deeper water. Jesus might have been reminded of another time when his father filled the waters with fish. We are told that Jesus was present with his heavenly father in the very beginning as he was creating all things. It was on the fifth day that God spoke and said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures." God then told these creatures to be fruitful and multiply. Even the fish listened to what the Lord said, and they were abundant when the disciples let down their nets.

You have heard the Lord speak to you today. Jesus has revealed to you the power of his word. His word for you today is "Do not fear." and we can do nothing else but to follow. Amen