



Feb. 10, 2019 Luke 5: 1-11 & Is. 6: 1-8

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[Refuse to fear failure](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

In both our readings today we encounter the moment of a call. Both Isaiah and Peter are very aware of their limitations and at first resist their calls. Both men are told not to be afraid. Whatever limits they have will be the way that God uses to show the people that they are not speaking for themselves, but for God. Today Peter confronts his limitations, but also risks ridicule and work so as to do what Jesus asks. In doing this he, and those around him realize that it is God at work in and through them, which causes them to leave their old way of being in the world for one that no one could imagine at the time. We have a new year now to enter into this same reality. We wonder what "nets" we will be asked to put out into the **deep** in order to follow Jesus.

LUKE 5:1-11

1 As the **crowd pressed** in on Jesus to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats moored by the side of the lake; the fishermen had **disembarked** and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the

boats, the one belonging to **Simon**, and asked him to **pull out** a short distance from the shore; then, remaining **seated**, he continued to teach the **crowds** from the **boat**. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to **Simon**, "Put out into the **deep water** and lower your **nets** for a **catch**." 5 **Simon** answered, "**Master**, we have been hard at it all **night** long and have caught **nothing**; but if you say so, I will lower the **nets**." 6 Upon doing this they **caught** such a great number of **fish** that their **nets** were at the **breaking** point. 7 They signaled to their **mates** in the other **boat** to come and help them. These came, and together they filled the two **boats** until they nearly **sank**. 8 At the sight of this, **Simon** Peter fell at the knees of Jesus saying, "Leave me, Lord. I am a **sinful** man." 9 For indeed, **amazement** at the catch they had made **seized** him and all his **shipmates**, 10 as well as **James** and **John**, **Zebedee's** sons, who were partners with **Simon**. Jesus said to **Simon**, "Do not be **afraid**. From now on you will be **catching** men." 11 With that they brought their **boats** to **land**, left **everything**, and became his **followers**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus asks Peter to put out into the deep and trust him to make it worth his time and effort. Have you ever been asked to go beyond your 'common sense' ways and trust that God is calling you to a new way of being in the world?

PRAYER: Carpenter Jesus, you ask the professional fishermen to follow your advice which makes them risk work and ridicule for something they could not imagine. But your words have opened them to new possibilities and they do just that. In this coming year of possibilities, help me as I, like they, take the chances you offer me to draw others to you like they did. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

CROWD: A crowd is a mass of people gathered in one place, usually for a common purpose or event. By now Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing was attracting significant attention and crowds.

How do I think Jesus felt as masses of people began to press in on him to hear the Word of God? What do I think the mood of the people was that day? Would I have been attracted to this new teacher/prophet/healer?

PRESSED: To press in around someone implies a sense of urgency and eagerness to be close to what is going on. There seems to be a powerful need to touch, or at least get close to that someone special.

When I think of this event, how does the word pressed help to 'get a handle' on the moment? Have I ever been somewhere where I pressed into something/someone? Was I excited? Afraid?

DISEMBARKED: To disembark is to set out from or for somewhere.

What do I think were the reactions of the crowd to Jesus' getting into the boat? Might I have thought that he was trying to escape? Do I think there was a sense of expectation when he stopped and sat down to teach?

BOAT: Luke makes a special point in telling us that the boat Jesus uses is Simon's.

What do I think Simon and the people made of this?? What would I make of it if Jesus chose my boat?

SIMON: Getting a new name implies a person has changed enough to need to be known differently. Simon was known as a fisherman of some means because he owned a boat. He will become Simon Peter after he has a life changing experience.

It is difficult to leave an established way of being for a new one. What do I think Simon felt when he was given a new name? Have I ever experienced a change in my life that required a new name?

PULL OUT: To pull out is to go beyond where you have been. Simon was asked to pull out away from the shore so Jesus could teach. Jesus was putting himself in Simon's hands and signaling that special attention is given to Simon.

Have I ever been involved in something that I sensed might change my life forever? Does this memory help me to understand what Simon might be experiencing?

SEATED: Teachers sat to give their lessons in Jesus' day. People have come to expect things to happen when Jesus sits to teach. (See Jesus in the synagogue in Lk. 4: 14-21) Then they wanted to throw him off the cliff.

Do I think this anger might reassert itself again? If not, why?

NIGHT: Nighttime was the best time for fishing, and still they caught nothing. Simon, who had already washed the nets, was not inclined to do such a useless thing, only to have to wash them again for nothing.

Has my faith ever asked me to do something again, even though I knew that it probably wouldn't succeed? Why did I give it one more try?

NOTHING: There was nothing in the nets earlier in the day. Jesus asked Simon to do a rather stupid thing when he told him to let the nets down again.

Have I 'let down any nets' recently? Did I feel stupid doing it?

CAUGHT: The word for caught used in the original language means, "to take something alive" so that it can remain alive. To catch a fish in the usual sense means the fish will die.

Do I think Simon 'caught' Jesus' message? If not then, when?

FISH: The fish spoken of here is probably one called a musht. Its nickname is St. Peter's fish. It can get up to 18 inches long and weigh 4 1/2 lbs. It is great for frying and has few small bones. It swims in shoals and is considered a valuable fish.

When the fishermen saw the quantity and quality of the fish, they must have been thrilled. Have I ever 'hauled in' an unexpected gift because of acting in faith? What did it feel like?

BREAKING: The nets were about to break because of the amount of fish caught. God overwhelmed the nets and the people in this event.

When was the last time I were overwhelmed by God's grace? What memories do I retain of this event?

MATES / SHIPMATES: Simon's shipmates have probably worked with him for some time. They might have even resented going through the extra work of letting the nets down again after having already gotten them cleaned up and put away. But he was their boss, so they did as they were told.

Has someone in authority ever gone against common sense and risked embarrassment that also caused me extra work? Did my estimation of them drop because of it? If so, why? If not, why?

SANK: They were out in the deep water. The boat almost sank when they tried to haul in the fish.

Imagine the feelings of all in the boat at this moment. Do most life transforming moments have that 'sinking' feeling about them? What is sinking?

SINFUL: Simon now sees himself in a totally new way. The word sin in the original language means, "to miss the mark". In one graced moment Simon sees how far off the mark he was about Jesus.

Have I ever been brought to my 'knees' in a moment of such realization? Did I experience God saying "Do not be afraid" at that time?

AMAZEMENT: The word amazement implies open-mouthed awe. Something totally unexpected and yet wonder-filled has just happened.

Simon now sees things about himself in new way. His first instinct is to feel unworthy. Is that a common reaction when a new truth is realized? Luke uses this moment to rename Simon to Peter 'the rock'. Do I think Simon, now Peter, caught the implications of this new name?

SEIZED: To be seized is to be caught by something/someone. Simon, the catcher, is now the one caught. Jesus is taking Simon 'alive' in order that he might 'truly live'.

What do I imagine went on in that boat about now?

JAMES / JOHN: These two brothers will also become followers of Jesus because of this event.

Have I ever been witness to something happening to someone else that caused me to make dramatic changes in the way I think or act?

ZEBEDEE: Zebedee was the father of James and John. He was in the fishing business with his sons. Their leaving to follow Jesus must have caused him some problems.

Have I, like Zebedee, had to adjust dramatically because of someone else's choices? Was I happy for them, or angry because of the changes it forced upon me? How do I think Zebedee dealt with this development?

AFRAID: The 'world' tries to make us do things by making us afraid of something or someone. Over and over Jesus tells people not to be afraid of the growth that his Father's love brings. It is almost as if we can judge if it is of God, by looking to the source of energy for the behavior.

Simon was attracted to Jesus because of the deeper understanding of God that he seemed to have. Now he experiences this life-changing event. What do I think made it possible for him to trust Jesus' words?

LAND: Peter's fishing was done on the sea. His new fishing will be done on land.

Does his new name 'rock' now take on deeper significance? In what ways?

EVERYTHING: When the fishermen were out during the 'night' they caught no-thing. Now in the 'light' of day, they are ready to leave every-thing and follow Jesus.

What have they now seen that enables them to make this choice? How does this passage of scripture 'enlighten' me as you attempt to follow Jesus?

FOLLOWED: Peter, James, and John now leave everything to follow Jesus.

What do I have to leave today in order to follow Jesus?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 5:1-11 // Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:3 // Mt. 13:1-2; Mk. 4:1; Lk. 5:4 // Jn. 21:6;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 6:1-8; Ps. 138: 1-8; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Lk. 5:1-11;

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 6:1-13; Ps. 138; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Lk. 5:1-11;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Already, in Luke 4:38-39, we see Jesus coming to the house of Simon, to heal his mother-in-law. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark this healing occurs shortly after the call by the lake, as a kind of follow-up. This seems more natural. But Luke has decided to narrate the two incidents in reverse order. However, there is a method in his manner. In Luke's hands, the story of Peter's call becomes a portrait of a disciple's repentance. With Luke, repentance is necessary for discipleship. Luke includes in his account persons not mentioned in the other Gospels. And each is a portrait of repentance. Besides Peter, here in chapter 5, we can include Zechariah, in Luke 1, the repentant woman in Luke 7, Zacchaeus, the short tax-collector who climbed a tree, in Luke 19, and the Good Thief in Luke 23. Also, Luke alone recounts the parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and the Pharisee and the repentant Tax-Collector (Luke 18). In addition, of course, there is the three-fold description of Paul's conversion in Acts, as mentioned earlier. Each of these involves repentance. In this regard, it is notable that Peter speaks to his sinfulness, not his sins. In Luke, repentance does not seem so much to be a matter of identifying certain sins as it is a question of self-knowledge. It is a call to change the direction of one's life. It is a reorientation more than a spell of housekeeping. For Luke's readers, Gentiles who are attracted to Luke's message concerning Jesus, this amounts to a challenge to the set of values with which they were raised — the Hellenist culture of the Roman Empire. The language of dominance and control is called to account, with the image of the Servant, Jesus. [Fr. Robert Beck 2/7/16](#)

We can manage having Christ sit in our boats as we stay close to shore. We can even hear better. But suddenly we find he is asking for more: "Put out into the deep waters." The depths of the sea. The depths of our own lives. His word tells us that there is another level of life within and beyond the world of management and security. The reaction of resistance is quick and firm. We have worked long and hard and got nothing in return. Common sense is enough to know how unreasonable this is. We have the expertise here. We are the fishermen—professionals. To move into the depths is to move out of a familiar, manageable self. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Fr. David Bock [Monastery Sunday Homilies 2/7/16](#)

"Each in his or her own way" the Council says. We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.[11] Indeed, when the great mystic, Saint John of the Cross, wrote his Spiritual Canticle, he preferred to avoid hard and fast rules for all. He explained that his verses were composed so that everyone could benefit from them "in his or her own

way”.[12] For God’s life is communicated “to some in one way and to others in another”.[13]

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. . . . That insight is hidden in the word vocation itself, which is rooted in the Latin for “voice.” Vocation does not mean a goal I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. . . . I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity. —Parker Palmer *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (Jossey-Bass: 2000), 4.

The world still waits for the truth that will set us free—my truth, your truth, our truth—the truth that was seeded in the earth when each of us arrived here formed in the image of God. Cultivating that truth, I believe, is the authentic vocation of every human being. In other words, your life is not about you. You are about a larger thing called Life. You are not your own. You are an instance of a universal and eternal pattern. Life is living itself in you. The myriad forms of life in the universe are merely parts of the One Life—that many of us call “God.” You and I don’t have to figure it all out, fix everything, or do life perfectly by ourselves. All we have to do is participate in this One Life. To find our unique niche in that Always Larger Life is what we mean by “vocation.” Parker Palmer

5.1–11: Great catch of fish (Mt 13.1–3a; 4.18–22; Mk 1.16–20; 4.1–2; Jn 21.4–7). 1: Lake of Gennesaret, Sea of Galilee, called “Kinneret” (NRSV: Chinnereth) in the Tanakh (Num 34.11; Deut 3.17; Josh 13.27). Word of God, the Torah as interpreted by Jesus and/or a prophetic revelation from him. 5: Master (Gk “epistatēs”), Luke’s equivalent for “Rabbi” (see Lk 9.33 || Mk 9.5). 8: Lord, 1.17n. Sinful, Luke does not detail Peter’s transgressions. Confession of sin is not a typical response to a miracle, but here appropriate, cf. 5.32. 11: Left everything, including families (see 5.28; 8.21; 9.61; 18.29 and compare 1 Kings 19.20). Pgs. 109-110.

[The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

Compare Luke’s call narrative with Mark 1: 16-17 and Mt. 4: 18-20.

“The will of God is not a ‘fate’ to which we must submit, but a creative act in our life that produces something absolutely new, something hitherto unforeseen by the laws and established patterns. Our cooperation consists not solely in conforming to external laws, but in opening our wills to this mutually creative act.” Thomas Merton



The Sea of Galilee, or Sea of Tiberias (Hebrew: Yam Kinneret; Arabic: Bahr Tabariya), is a lake in northeastern Israel. It is 21 km (13 mi) long, by 12 km (7.5 mi) at its widest point, and has an area of 166 sq km (64 sq mi). It lies 212 m (696 ft) below sea level and has a maximum depth of 48 m (157 ft). Of the several towns and villages on its shores, TIBERIAS, on the west bank, is the largest. Agricultural settlements ring the lake, which is the source of irrigation carried by canal and tunnel as far as the Negev in southern Israel. It is also important as a fishing ground and tourist attraction. Basalt ridges flank the basin--part of the GREAT RIFT VALLEY--that holds the Sea of Galilee, and alluvial plains are to the north and south. The lake is fed principally by the JORDAN RIVER.

Drainage, from its southern end, is also provided by the Jordan. Winter rainfall averages 445 mm (17.5 in), and the mean monthly temperature ranges from 7.4 deg C (45.3 deg F) in January to 31 deg C (88 deg F) in July. The Sea of Galilee features prominently in the New Testament, since Jesus Christ worked and preached in the towns surrounding it and is reputed to have walked on its water.

Martin Ira Glassner

The person has particular gifts, life experiences, and understandings of those experiences that suit him for the mission. This is what we mean when we say that we are called by name. We are not called by category: ethnic, diagnostic, or any other. Surrendering ones natural capacities to this service of God is how we find ultimate fulfillment in this life....We know we are living our mission when our personal truth becomes identical with God's truth. [Fr. Jonah Wharff 7/12/15](#)

God's call to us is continuous, particular, and it takes a lifetime to truly grasp it, for it "grows and changes as we come into a fuller realization of our adult journey of faith." Jean Hinderer, CSA

The world is made up of people who are fully alive in it: that is, of the people who can be themselves in it and can enter into a living and fruitful relationship with each other in it. Thomas Merton : *Love and Living*: Pg.3.

If we can, by God's grace, turn ourselves entirely to Him, and put aside everything else in order to speak with Him and worship Him, this does not mean that we can always imagine Him or feel His presence. Neither imagination nor feeling are required for a full conversion of our whole being to God. Nor is intense concentration on an idea of God especially desirable. Hard as it is to convey in human language, there is a very real and very recognizable (but almost entirely undefinable) Presence of God, in which we confront Him in prayer knowing Him by Whom we are known, aware of Him Who is aware of us, loving Him by Whom we know ourselves to be loved.- Thomas Merton

It is in the presence of divine majesty that we become aware of the truth about ourselves. This is the root of true conversion. Neither Peter nor Isaiah know enough to say, "Have mercy." Rather, their instinctive shock response is to seek to remove themselves from that presence, which is so glorious, so powerful, so holy that we humans literally cannot stand it. But the Lord, in both instances, carries

his beloved through the experience of awe to new life. The Lord does not allow them to wallow in their feelings or to run away because it is too much for them. Instead he calls them more deeply to himself. Thus the most far reaching and deeply effective conversion takes place not when someone tells us how bad we are, but when someone reveals to us our true goodness and holiness. Only this revelation is powerful enough to draw us into a whole new way of seeing and living "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8), says Isaiah. "Do not be afraid," Jesus tells Peter, "from now on you will be catching people" (Luke 5:10). Pg. 40. Fitzpatrick, Mother Gail, OCSO. Seasons of Grace: Wisdom from the Cloister. Chicago. ACTA Pub. 2000.

The ancients used a system whereby each letter was associated with a number (isopsephia) and could therefore break open mysterious connections between things. "The Greeks and the Jews were remarkably gifted for both arithmetical calculation and transcendental speculation. They liked all kinds of subtleties, including those of number mysticism, which brought both aptitudes into play...It gave rise to divination by numbers inspired sibyls, soothsayers, and pagan theologoi, it disquieted the Fathers of the Church, who were not always able to resist its fascination. One such Father Theophanes Kerameus saw a representation of the Universal Church in the name of Rebecca (wife of Isaac and mother of the twins Jacob and Esau) because, according to him., There were 153 species of fishes in the sea, all of them taken by Simon and his fellow fishermen in the abundant catch described in Lk. 5: 4-7 and 153 was the numerical value of the Greek form of Rebecca's name. Ifrah, Georges, From One to Zero. NY. Viking. 1981. Pgs. 301-2.

The Greek word for fish is *ichthys*. It is said to have been adopted as a Christian symbol because it contains the initial letter of the appellation "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

Ordinary failures in work are an inevitable part of the descent of the spirit into human limitation. Failure is a mystery, not a problem. Pg. 196. Moore, Thomas. Care of the Soul. NY. HarperCollins Pub. 1992

We cannot bring the false self to an end by ourselves; we can only allow it to die. If we do what we can do to dismantle it, God, in response to our efforts, moves in and completes the job. All we have to do then is to consent. But that is about the biggest job there is.- Thomas Keating, Invitation to Love

Bad situations don't have to make us bitter--they can make us better! God can use the good, the bad, the happy, and the sad to mold us into the people He wants us to be. Our goal should be to focus not on what others do to us but what God will do through us. Rest assured, what others may intend for evil, God will use for good. - Skip Heitzig

This is what vocation, marital or monastic, calls us to: to live for a cause, a love, for which we would sustain any hardship. 5/17/15 [Fr. Jonah Wharaff](#)

So many terrible things happen every day that we start wondering whether the few things we do ourselves make any sense. When people are starving only a few thousand miles away, when wars are raging close to our borders, when countless people in our own cities have no homes to live in, our own activities look futile. Such considerations, however, can paralyze us and depress us. Here the word call becomes important. We are not called to save the world, solve all problems, and help all people. But we each have our own unique call, in our families, in our work, in our world. We have to keep asking God to help us see clearly what our call is and to give us the strength to live out that call with trust. Then we will discover that our faithfulness to a small task is the most healing response to the illnesses of our time. Henri Nouwen

We will never find our vocations by trying to figure out whether we are better or worse than others. We are good enough to do what we are called to do. Be yourself! Henri Nouwen

God's image within each of us is inherent and irrevocable. God's likeness is our unique expression of that image, inviting our full and conscious participation. Vocation is one way in which we discover and grow into our "True Self." I'm not speaking so much about education, career, or livelihood, though in some cases they might overlap. In general, it is a Larger Life that somehow calls us forward (vocatio means "a call or summons" in Latin), more than we call it to us. We do not know its name yet, so how can we call it? If we engineer the process too much, we often mistake a security-based occupation for our soul's vocation. Richard Rohr

The voice of God invites us to live beyond all fear, even as it inspires holy fear. When God appears in human history, invariably the first words are: "Do not be afraid!" God's presence is meant to eradicate all fear, even as it invites us to live in "holy fear", in a reverence and chastity that help create a world within which no one needs to fear anything. [Fr. Ron Rolheiser](#)

"If the path before you is clear, you're probably on someone else's." Joseph Campbell

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com
Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012.. Pgs. 46-49.