

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Follow Me...We’ll Figure Out the Rest as We Go Along!”

Based on Luke 5:1-11

It had been a rough night on the boats, with little to show for their efforts. The art of fishing for a living was a finely tuned craft that combined strong arms, the knowledge of water currents, wind, sun, and season. But luck had not been on their side as the fishermen returned to shore in the early morning light, with their boats still light in the water.

As the men grumbled amongst themselves, and laid their nets out to dry, a crowd was gathering at the other end of the docks, slowly making its way towards them. By the time the crowd reached them, the fishermen had to quickly gather the nets off the ground so they were not lost in the shuffle of feet. The man at the center of attention smiled at Simon Peter, and said, “Things are getting a little stuffy. Could I step into your boat and push out a few feet? The people will be able to hear Me better, and I can have a little room to breathe fresh air.”

It was bothersome, but not an unreasonable request. As the boat was maneuvered into position, the Man began to talk to Peter, and James, and John, and the other fishermen gathered around. They shared of the bad catch the night before, the loss of coins at the fish market, and unhappy families at home when told there would be no supper that night. Jesus said,

“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”
(v4)

“DON’T BE AFRAID; FROM NOW ON YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE.”¹¹ SO THEY PULLED THEIR BOATS UP ON SHORE, LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED HIM.

~LUKE 5:11

They reminded the stranger about the bad catch the night before, but on a whim, they complied.

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of

fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.
(v6-7).

Now He had their attention. As the day continued, the crowd gathered more. And the fishermen remained. As the sun began to set, the crowd dwindled and most of the fishermen went home to rest. But a few lingered, long after the others had left. As the first stars of the evening began to make their appearance in the coming darkness, Jesus looked at Simon Peter and James and John and said quietly, “Follow Me...we’ll figure out the rest as we go along.”

This story from Luke is one of the most beloved for the Reformed Christian. It envelopes the principals of work and faith, or faith and work (as all good reformers must wrestle with), along with a simple image of Christ as the Master Fishermen, and we, His people, good fish in the net.

But...

- What if you aren’t in the net?

- What if you are the wrong kind of fish in the net?
- What if you don't want to be caught?
- ❖ Does this story hold the same power if you don't happen to be a Sunday-morning-church-going kind of gal, comfortable in your pew, or shall we say, comfortable in the net?
- ❖ Does this story hold the same power if you like to be an elusive slippery fish who always manages to stay just out of reach of the edge of the net, playing 'cat-and-mouse' with God: body in the pew but no commitment in the heart?
- ❖ Does this story hold the same power if like Simon Peter, you feel unworthy to be caught?

My friends,

- I have sat in a church where the colour of my skin made me stick out like a sore thumb, and watched as people tried not to stare, in curiosity, or in criticism, that I was in their presence and in their pew.
- I have sat in a church where I was politely but firmly told that I did not belong, and

was not welcome to approach the Lord's Table.

- I have stood at our front door here at Knox, in the cold air of winter, and tried to convince a hungry soul that she was worthy to enter, that God could understand, even the things we ourselves cannot understand about ourselves...to no avail.

This story is not nearly as neat and tidy if we are not one of the fish in the net. But perhaps this story is not just about those in the net, but to those outside as well.

- ❖ What about the fishermen who did not say and listen to Jesus until the end?
- ❖ What about those who had to leave because of other responsibilities or because they felt the weight of other responsibilities?
- ❖ What about those whose hearts were touched by the words of our Saviour but were overwhelmed with tears of shame or anger or hurt and quickly moved to the back of the crowd so as to not appear foolish?

Would the Christ you know turn His back on these fishermen? Would He turn His back on those who were not yet in the net? Will He turn

His back today, on those who are not yet in our pews?

Not the Saviour, I serve. He says to each of us, "Follow Me...and we'll figure out the rest as we go along."

To those who would become leaders of the faith, like Simon Peter, and James and John. To those who listened and would become quiet followers in the future...

To those who feel they are not ready for grace...

To those who feel unworthy of forgiveness and a second chance...

To those in the net...

To those just outside the net's reach...

To those waiting to be caught...

To those fighting against being caught...

To those unsure of what to believe...

Christ says, "Follow Me. We'll figure out the rest as we go along."

*You call us, Christ, to gather
the people of the earth.
We cannot fish for only those
lives we think have worth.
We spread your net of gospel
across the water's face,
Our boat a common shelter for
all found by your grace.*

~You Walk Along the Shoreline
(Sylvia Dunstan)