**Luke 5:1-11** February 10, 2019

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Epiphany 5

*Luke 5:1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

*4When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” 5Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” 6When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7So 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. 8When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” 9For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” 11So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

**When Jesus Butts Into Your Life**

At the beginning of the service I said, “Today is the fifth Sunday after Epiphany.” What does that mean? Literally it means just what it says. The day of Epiphany, the day that celebrated the Wise Men coming to worship baby Jesus, was January 6th. Today is the fifth Sunday after that day. But as the Sundays roll by, we aren’t just counting weeks, like some sort of odometer for church. There is a progression of thought.

Well, what is this week? If you are 45 or older, maybe you can still remember the arrival of the Personal Pan Pizza. Briefly researching this, the internet being what it is, a couple days ago I watched a couple commercials from 1983, “big hair” and all, when Pizza Hut introduced the Personal Pan Pizza®. And get this, the advertised price was $1.49! In a small way the Personal Pan Pizza was ground-breaking. Before that, pizza was something people just assumed you needed a tableful of people to enjoy. Now it was re-marketed for the individual.

Which is the sign of the times! Cater to the individual. And we love it. Why do our 60” living room TVs increasingly have no one watching them, while people gaze at little 5.5” screens? Because each of us wants to individually watch exactly what we want! The Personal Pan Pizza was one of many signs of the individualization of everything.

Epiphany 5 is the Personal Pan Pizza of Epiphany. Epiphany celebrates that Jesus is the Light of the world, the Savior of all. He’s not just for Jews. He’s for *all* people: great masses, millions, entire nations. In Epiphany Jesus performs his miracles and signs as a testimony to people the world over.

But in today’s reading on the fifth Sunday of Epiphany, Jesus appeals to and works in an individual, not the masses of people. It is about one person, with his quirks and strengths and needs and abilities, called by Jesus. How wonderful that Jesus always keeps the big picture and the little picture in view; the great crowds and the individual.

Before we think about the message today, I have to say something about the way we approach Bible events. Like anything written, there is quite a bit of information that is *not* in God’s written record. That’s not to say it is deficient. God preserved exactly what he wants us to know. But in most Bible events we kind of guess at some things: some of the reasons people do things, the feelings they had, what the scenery looked like, what time of day it was. Today, I am going to go a little further than I usually do into some of these un-writtens. I will make some guesses because I think that they are hinted at in our reading. But I need to remind myself and I want you to realize that some of these “assumptions” are mine, and nothing more.

**A. He Gets in the Way**

Having said that, let’s listen to God’s word. ***“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret*** [which you know as the Sea of Galilee]***, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.”*** On the rocky shores of this lake we find Jesus doing what we often find him doing. He was teaching crowds of people.

This was early in his ministry. At least half a dozen, maybe more, of The Twelve had heard Jesus and paid him some attention. But they were not yet his full-time protégés. Some of the time they were with Jesus, some of the time they were back at their occupations making a living.

Well, Jesus was teaching at the lakeshore and next to teacher Jesus were fishermen. Now I want you to notice: these fishermen were not in the crowd. I don’t think that they were ignoring Jesus. They are family men with families to feed. Just one of those guesses, but I am guessing that Jesus decided to set up shop next to these fishermen rather than the other way around. So Jesus preaches while they take care of their fishing tackle.

As luck would have it, Jesus knew these fishermen. How about that? It just so happens that Jesus had chosen to teach next to these fishermen whom he already knew! One of those fishermen was Simon, whom Jesus would later rename Peter. Already you can see Jesus butting into Simon’s life.

As he taught, Jesus was so crowded that he went over to Simon’s boat, Simon who was busy washing his nets, and Jesus got in it. Then Jesus requested Peter to quit doing whatever it was he was doing, and to push a few yards off shore so that he could better speak to the crowds.

Now if I am Simon I may not exactly be annoyed, but I got no sleep last night, the fishing was awful, no food for the table or money for the business, and now Jesus wants me to quit equipment maintenance for an hour or two so I can just sit in the boat while he talks. I like him and all. I think he is great, but… Let me ask you: How long would you let a pastor sit in your living room before you started to give him subtle hints that you had things to do?

Finally Jesus wraps up his teaching, and just when Simon figures he can get back to business, Jesus wants to go on a fishing trip. ***“When he had finished speaking, [Jesus] said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”*** (4-5) Simon does what Jesus wants out of respect and probably not a whole lot else. He sounds almost like a subordinate officer with a complaint. “With all due respect, sir. I have been fishing these waters all my life. I make my living out here. You are a carpenter from up in the hills by Nazareth. Now you are a fine preacher and all. And up there at the wedding of Cana you did something pretty amazing. But I *know* that if we didn’t catch a thing out on the lake through the night, we’re certainly not catching anything with the sun high in the sky!”

Complaint filed, Simon still did it just because Jesus said it. He rowed the boat out there and he took that net that he had just washed and might now have to wash again, and he threw it into the lake. I will say this: grudging obedience is way, way better than disobedience. Remember that. Sometimes people say, “If my heart isn’t in it, then I really shouldn’t do it.” Like Sunday morning. Some people think that if they wake up on Sunday morning and don’t want to go to church they somehow think they really shouldn’t “Because my heart isn’t in it.” Grudging obedience is better than disobedience. And if you think I’m way off base on this one, then I guess you think that Simon should have said to Jesus, “No, Jesus. My heart’s not in it. I’m not going to go out.” I don’t think he would have been impressed.

**II. He Makes You Know Your Need**

Well, Simon did row a few hundred yards out, with just Jesus in the boat, out into the deep of the lake. He put the oars down, took the large net in his fisherman hands. He hurled the net spreading in a perfect circle, the weights pulling the net down, down into the lake. And immediately that net trapped the best catch of this fisherman’s life.

To Simon’s credit, he doesn’t try to rationalize it. He doesn’t think, “It must be a coincidence.” As he wrestled to secure the bursting net, Simon glanced toward the single passenger in his boat and he knew what had just happened. And once his partners arrived to secure *two* boats full of fish, Peter didn’t just go hat in hand to Jesus, he fell on his knees before Jesus ***“and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”***

Simon did not call himself “honored” by Jesus’ presence, or even “unworthy”. Simon called himself sinful. “Jesus, I am a sinner! Go away!” Something profound has happened to Simon!

Simon was suddenly aware of things he had done, the words he had said, thoughts he had thought. Like when Jesus told him to row out into the deep water and he thought Jesus was off his rocker. When Jesus told him to put his net down into the water and he really didn’t want to put his newly washed nets down into the sea for a land-lubber’s fishing fantasies. Oh, sure, he obeyed out of respect, but it was grudgingly given. He had not jumped up and said, “Yah, Jesus! If you say I should put the net down, I know it’ll work.” No. Simon had felt none of that. And so Simon looks at a boat almost sinking from load the fish and the man sharing the boat with him and called himself a “sinner.”

But there was probably more to it than that. Maybe it was the compromising yearbook photos from his senior year at Bethsaida High School, or the stories his friends could tell about his younger years. He called himself a sinful man because he knew who he had been, and still was. And he knew Jesus knew who he had been and still was. “Please, just go away, Jesus. I’m not worthy.”

Jesus had butted into Simon’s life that day. On this day Jesus had decided to preach where Simon was washing his nets, and Jesus chose to step into Simon’s boat, and Jesus “asked” him to put out a little ways in the lake. Then Jesus told Simon to put out in deep waters even though Simon didn’t want to. And Jesus told Simon to throw in the nets. Time and again Jesus kept pushing Simon in a direction he didn’t want to go. Jesus had butted into Simon’s life, and what happened was that Simon came away saying, ***“I am a sinful man.”*** That’s what happens when Jesus comes into your life and you pay attention. You realize that he is God, that he is something bigger than we can imagine. And you realize that we are, well, sinful.

**III. He Tells the Listening, “Do not Fear!”**

To such, not to the people who come to Jesus with that swagger talking about all the good they’ve done, but to the ones who bow before him saying, “Be merciful to me, a sinner.” To these Jesus says, ***“Do not be afraid!”*** He says it to people like Simon who said, *“I am a sinful man.”* Like Isaiah the prophet who said, *“I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.”* People who look at their lives and realized that they had nothing to offer God, nothing worthy of a holy, mighty God. Jesus tells these self-confessed sinners to not be afraid because he took all those bad words, and the hateful thoughts, and the selfish actions, and Jesus clothed himself in your sin and on that ugly cross, clothed only in your filth, he suffered and died. More than that Jesus fulfilled the divine Law in your place, so that when God looks at us he sees none of our sin, only the righteous acts of Jesus. And so Jesus says, to all such, ***“Do not be afraid!”***

**IV. He Speaks a Unique Calling**

There is one more thing that happens when Jesus butts into your life. He speaks a word unique to you and your life. To Simon who would become the Apostle Peter, his unique word was, ***“From now on you will catch men.”*** It was a word to this fisherman who would hang up his oars and his nets and become a full-time follower of Jesus, and after that, a full-time proclaimer of Jesus’ message. That was Simon’s calling.

It isn’t the same for all. Zacchaeus, that tax collector, repented and learned to love Jesus one amazing day. But Jesus didn’t tell him to hand in his accounting ledgers. Jesus was amazed at a certain centurion’s humble faith even saying, *“I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”* But Jesus did not tell him to resign his commission and follow him. Point being that Jesus’ call to Simon to leave all and follow him was not a call to all, but a specific call to one.

When Jesus butts into your life, you *will* be called with a call to service unique to you. It might just be to full time ministry, and we pray that in the coming generation there will be those willing to devote themselves to full-time gospel ministry. But whether that or another is your calling when Jesus claims you as his own telling you, “Do not fear,” he is also going to call you to service. Perhaps as a carpenter, a fisherman, a soldier, a graphic designer, a truck driver, a registered nurse, a factory worker, a teacher. If you were kneeling before Jesus and he spoke to you as an individual, (think Personal Pan Pizza here) how would Jesus finish this sentence to you: ***“Do not fear. From now on you will…”***

What happens when Jesus butts into your life? Maybe the last verse says more than my 20 minutes of preaching. ***“So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”*** Amen.