

“Follow Me: Volume II”  
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Luke 5:1-11

Each one of the Gospels has their own version of Jesus calling the disciples. Here is the story according to Luke.

Luke 5:1-11

Early in Jesus’ ministry, he begins to draw crowds about him as he teaches along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. In this version, Jesus sees several fishermen who have come in for the day and are washing their nets. The fishermen are cleaning up, setting up their boats for the following day.

Jesus gets in to one of the boats and asks for a ride out into deep water. Frankly, they don’t want to go back out. They had a bad day and didn’t catch much if anything. But Jesus is persuasive. So, Peter takes him out.

After Jesus is done preaching to the crowd gathered there on the shore, he tells Peter to put his nets out. Now, Peter is really reluctant, but it’s Jesus that’s asking—so he does. And he catches so many fish that he has to call his partners to bring another boat, so as to fill it as well.

When they brought the boats to shore, Peter, James and John left their boats and the fish to follow Jesus.

Ralph Milton says; “Peter’s a bit like a guy who wins the lottery, but then never goes to cash the winning ticket. Peter doesn’t take that haul of fish to the market to sell so he doesn’t benefit from the bonanza. He and his partners, James and John, just leave everything there and follow Jesus. Which makes no economic sense.

“It doesn’t make economic sense for a smart person with good people skills to go into ministry, either. There’s way more money to be made selling something.” (rumors, p.2)

What the crowd saw as they witnesses this scene was a sermon in the making. It was an even more powerful sermon than Jesus preached that day. What would make perfectly fine fishermen leave their catch and their livelihood? They’d only leave it if they knew they had found something much, much better. And they had. They found Jesus right after Jesus found them.

Now if Peter had followed his first instinct, which was to ignore Jesus’ request, imagine what he would have missed. How many times does someone suggest to us that we should do something we already know how to do, differently? And how often do we want to tell them not too politely to buzz off? What might happen if we took that chance? What’s the worst thing that could happen—we’d be right and they’d be wrong?

But Peter, having just listened to Jesus preaching to the crowd, sucks in his pride, and does what Jesus suggests. The benefits were so amazing that one boat was not big enough for the haul. Going against logic and following Jesus makes all the difference.

There are many versions of this story, but basically the story goes like this: “There was a group that called themselves The Fisherfolk Club. They started out as a gathering of people who earned their living fishing in the ocean. At first, only real fisherfolk could join. But not wanting to be selfish, and because they had nice facilities that needed to be paid for, they invited others to come in too.

“In the club headquarters there were fish symbols galore, hooks, nets, and floats and rods. All the members of the club, even those who were not fishers, wore old hats with lures stuck in them and tall wading boots which got quite uncomfortable on hot days. But they were proud to be fishers and so never took them off.

“They had a well-stocked library about fishing. And several times a year they ran seminars to which world-renowned fishers were invited to come and deliver learned lectures. All the talk and all the activities of the club centered around fishing, but as the years went by, fewer and fewer of the members actually went out fishing.

“Then one day, the club had a new member. They had not had a new member for some time, so this was an interesting experience. And the new member asked an interesting question. “When do you go fishing?”

“Well, it turned out that the members of The Fisherfolk Club had never caught a fish. In fact, they had never actually seen a live fish. And the idea that they should go out there in a boat or wade into the water came as quite a shock to them.

“They had long meetings on the subject and finally came to the conclusion that the new member would have to leave. The new member obviously knew very little about what it really meant to be a member of The Fisherfolk Club.” (rumors, p.3)

And then there’s the story about Jesus and the disciples in a pub talking about who was the best fisherman. But I think that one is a story for another day...

So, friends and members of the Canton Center Church, as the descendants of the original members of The Fisherfolk Club, more commonly referred to in the Gospels as the disciples, what do we do when people ask us what is it that we do at our meetings? Jesus told us that we wouldn’t be fishing for fish, but that he would teach us how to fish for people.

Do we have a constitution and by-laws that talk about catching people? Do we wear special clothing or insignia that show people we are members of the club? Does our building need to be maintained? Do we have images of former days when we actually fished for people? How many people have we actually caught or do we rely on people being born into the club? Do we push out new members because they think we should be doing more fishing?

Friends, while our text today for today does talk about learning how to fish for people, it is also about listening to Jesus. It’s about taking Jesus’ advice even when it seems to go against common sense and the way things have always been done. Jesus

wants us to take risks, do things differently, go out of our way for him and for God's children. Sometimes that means going into neighborhoods we'd rather not; sometimes it means spending time with people who are not "our kind"; sometimes it means giving just a little bit more so that others can eat today. On a day when Americans are expected to consume as many calories as they do at Thanksgiving feasts, in Super Bowl party treats, can we spare just a little of our time, talent or treasure to improve the quality of someone's life—in Jesus' name?

Peter didn't want to have to live out Jesus' sermon that day on the Sea of Galilee, any more than we do today. But when he did, his life and our lives were changed forever. So, while you're fishing in the snack tray for your favorite treat, think about what other kind of fishing Jesus calls us to do.

Thanks be to God. Amen.