

COME ... FOLLOW ME ... THERE'S WORK TO DO

Isaiah 6:1-8

Luke 5:1-11

February 9, 2025

"In God's kingdom, immigrants and refugees, transgender people, the poor and the marginalized are not at the edges, fearful and alone. They are at the center of the Gospel story." With these words Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe said in a sermon in the Washington National Cathedral just last week at the time of his seating as the presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church.

The church of Jesus Christ is not the result of a group of good people getting together to brainstorm about how to do good deeds for others; it is the result of a call—a call to action by Jesus. This is what is called discipleship. What is meant by discipleship?

The Living Church periodical includes each month a summary of the lectionary texts for each Sunday. I would like to read the opening paragraph of that summary for this Sunday.

"To be a disciple one needs two things—a master and a teachable spirit. If the meaning of disciple is learner, then a disciple must be dependent upon a teacher. But at the same time, to be a learner, the disciple must be willing to be taught. To be in such a relationship, the disciple needs to be willing, humble, and dedicated." [The Living Church, 1/12/2025, p. 44]

Luke's narrative of the calling of the first disciples illustrates this for us. A bunch of fishermen had just completed a busy day on the lake—they were tired, bummed, and depressed by a total failure to catch any fish that day. Jesus appears on the shoreline. It's Peter who interacts with Jesus. Jesus tells him to get back into the boat with him and return to the water and let down the nets. Hesitant at first, Peter was willing to do what Jesus requested—WILLING.

But also, we must assume, humiliated by his utter failure as a fisherman. They were professional fishermen who had just come back to the shore empty, and probably humiliated at the thought that going back out to fish where they had just been fishing was going to make any difference—HUMBLE.

Now having demonstrated his willingness to do what he was told to do, and humiliated at his failure, he committed himself to doing what he was told—DEDICATED.

It is helpful to look at our first lesson today, Isaiah's call, in this light. "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!" Isaiah admitted his humility—I'm not sure about the willingness bit. But he knew his "sin was blotted out" and he was totally transformed, saying: "Here am I; send me!" He was dedicated to the work to which he was called.

I think it is also important for us to look further at our Gospel lesson, focusing on the catch. In addition to the call to discipleship, Luke wants us to look at something else, as well. And that is the abundance of fish that were caught. Do you remember my sermon last fall: "out of nothing ... everything". It was the story of the widow's mite. She had little to contribute to the temple kitty, but Jesus said that in her will, her humility, and her dedication, she made the greater offering. This is another account of God's abundance. The big catch proclaims the good news that, in your empty nets, God will fill them to overflowing. And it should also be noted that it was into the lives of those fisherman that day that God provided the abundance for ministry. Out of nothing God provided everything. We don't earn it; we don't achieve a certain something first. Like God's grace, it is God's abundance that we are offered. All Jesus asks of us is willingness, humility, and dedication.

We will end our worship service this morning singing a really nice hymn from the Iona Community. It will give you the opportunity to display willingness, humility, and dedication to the work to which you are called.

I hope we mean it when we sing, but in order to be able to let the words sink in, I invite you to read with me the first and fifth verses right now (WLP #757):

"Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be known? Will you let my name be known? Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?"

Christ, your summons echoes true when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In your company I'll go where your love be footsteps show, thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me."

These are scary times. I am afraid. I'm sure you are as well. I can identify with the fishermen. They were amazed—I'd say scared—by the catch of fish. I see in that catch of fish the abundance of issues we are faced with along with the abundance from God to deal with them. Bishop Rowe mentioned some of them—immigrants and refugees, transgender people, the poor and the marginalized, all those fearful and alone. But I also think of racism, homophobia, homelessness, hunger, and despair In so many of my brothers and sisters—not to mention meanness, rage, and anger. Are you with me?

Jesus said to Peter and his fishing buddies: "Do not be afraid." But he didn't say because I will make everything alright. He said this because he will be with us to do the work he has given us to do. Let's get to work!