

“Casting Your Nets Deep!”

Luke 5:1-11

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When I visited a members' house early this week, I saw a sign with a hook for hat on the porch. The sign says, “If this hat's missing, I've gone fishin'.” I know there are some fishing experts in our congregation. I read a sign about fishing: “Give a man a fish and he has food for a day; teach him how to fish and you get rid of him for the entire weekend.” When you go fishing for the weekend, make sure with your wife or partner that they still love you! I have read another humorous one, “My biggest worry is that my wife (when I'm dead) will sell my fishing gear for what I said I paid for it.” I am not certain whether Jesus liked to go fishing or not, but for sure he loved to use this metaphor. He may have used fishing just for his spiritual principle. One more quote about fishing is, “The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope. (John Buchan)” Fishing is a great metaphor to describe Jesus' passion and ministry for people. This morning, I continue to explore Jesus' spiritual lesson about fishing for people. I name this sermon series as “Gone Fishin' with Jesus”. I hope we will find a new spiritual insight from Jesus' teaching today.

Today's Scripture message is simple. Most of all, the lake of Gennesaret is another name of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd was seeking the word of God from Jesus at the shore of the lake. Among the crowd, there were some fishermen including Peter with a couple of boats nearby. As we know, they had been out fishing all night but they couldn't catch any fish. We can easily imagine how they would feel. They must have been very discouraged and disappointed when they were cleaning their nets. After Jesus was done teaching to the crowds, he looked over to Simon and says, “Go out a little further, to the deep water, and let down your nets.” Another Bible version describes it this way: “Push out into deep water and let out your nets for a catch.” Jesus simply said to Peter, “Let's leave the shallows and go to the deep to throw your nets.” We already know what happened. The Bible says that they came and filled both boats. In other words, they were empty but now they received abundance. Jesus' point was that we can go from emptiness to abundance.

We all want the blessing of abundance. What does this mean to us? Abundance doesn't mean only our individual blessings like healing, peace or happiness, but also levels of shalom and reconciliation. When the fishermen were in despair after they came home with empty nets, Jesus taught them a new way to be full and thrive in their lives. Jesus suggested Peter to try two things: 1.

Push out into deep water and 2. Let your nets out for a catch. Let us go little deeper and further to find more meaning. But what did Jesus mean to go to the deep? I want to share a little more information about the depth of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is the largest freshwater lake in Israel. It is about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. The depth of the lake is around 141 ft deep. If you have a little difficulty in picturing the size of this lake, compare it with Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe is 21 miles long, 13 miles wide and its average depth is 1,000ft. to 1,645 ft. When you come closer to the deep water, the water colors get darker. It could be overwhelming if you were to sit in a kayak or fishing boat by yourself.

Where will Jesus challenge us to go places of ‘deep water’ in our lives and in our world? Definitely it requires courage, trust, and boldness. It is risky and uncomfortable. But we have to go to the deep in order to receive God’s abundance. Actually, Jesus always invites us to go there as disciples. We Christians are called to go ‘to the deep water.’ Thinking of this image, I think of the human sexuality issue in our denomination as an example. As many of you know, our denomination and the book of discipline currently defines homosexual practice as “incompatible with Christian teaching.” At the 2004 General Conference, a Connection Table Task Force team was formed to serve as both the visioning body of the church and the steward of resources to carry out the vision of the denomination worldwide, especially continuing in conversation about human sexuality. The Connectional Table plans to draft legislation that will remove prohibitive language and will allow clergy to officiate at same-sex weddings. At the 2016 General Conference, if these proposals are affirmed by General Conference, then our denomination clergy could officiate at same-sex marriages and wouldn’t lose their credentials or could come out as gay clergy.¹ We can expect to hear more about this before the General Conference. Reaching the deep water requires of us boldness and courage to come out of our comfort zone to take risk. The fishermen couldn’t catch anything because they simply refused to go too deep. Now Jesus challenges us to go deep to receive abundant blessings.

Secondly, I invite you to imagine what it means to cast your nets deep. We know that Jesus is not a fisherman. He is a son of a carpenter. But those disciples, especially Peter, are fishing experts with great skills and years of experience. When Jesus recommended to him to leave the shallows and go to the deep, Peter told Jesus, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” Obviously, Peter’s

¹ <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/church-body-proposes-more-open-stance-on-homosexuality>

tone sounds negative and critical to his master's suggestion. In other words, "Even though I do this for you, I know we won't catch anything because we know better than you, Master. We are professional fishermen!" What Jesus wanted to point out here is our self-trust, self-sufficient life attitude without God. Or this can be a metaphor of our past which still affects us even in our present. If we are stuck in the past, we cannot move forward and be ready for casting our new nets deep in order to catch new possibilities. Jesus encourages us to let go of our past, our self-reliance, and self-pride philosophy. Instead, trust Jesus as our spiritual fishing coach to reach a place for abundant blessings. If Peter wouldn't have trusted in Jesus, he could have missed these wonderful blessings. I hope and pray that we all discern this call for not only our spiritual discipline, but also as good advice for our lives. May the blessings of God be upon you and be yours. Amen.