

TRINITY 5

Gen. I Peter 3:8ff

Luke 5:1ff

+In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen+

Please consider a few questions this morning as preludes into the Gospel from Luke. HOW did you know what path in life you wanted to take, when you had not yet been on it? That is, how did you know the career, work, or endeavors you would eventually select would be the right direction for you? When it came to selecting a life partner what inner voice or outer influences led you to the person who would be at times closer to you than you are to yourself? When you consider the values that both drive and direct how you act and interact with others, from where do they derive? Can you name the deepest longing, the desire that beckons you more powerfully than any other? What or Who would it be? I want you to hold on to those questions and ponder them in your heart. I think they are vitally connected to why we are here in the first place and to what we have just heard.

The story of Jesus by the lake of Galilee is familiar. It occurs in Matthew and Mark as well, although more often we remember the phrase from their telling, “Come and I will make you fishers of men”. Luke does not include that but says he will have them “net the living-net life”. He tells a rather nuanced version with glimpses of what happens when people hear and decide to follow a way of life. Here, in Luke’s rendering, Jesus is already well known and becoming a person who draws others to hear him. Here a miraculous event leads Peter to reflect on his own soul in light of the transcendent power of God. Most lectionaries have Isaiah 6, the vision of God in the Temple and the calling of Isaiah as the OT lesson today as it mirrors Peter’s experience. Peter refers to Jesus as epistates or ‘one with authority’ before the fishing expedition, but afterward falls at this feet (worships) and calls him KURIOS, or Lord; a looking forward to the power of the resurrection. Here we have the natural reaction of fear to the inexplicable replaced with trust, and trust begets life, energy, and hope. The same words are said to these same men after the crucifixion and resurrection—Fear Not! And finally, Luke tells us these poor workers ‘left everything’ which is a symbolic way of saying that upon encountering God in life all else seems pale by comparison. Today is about hearing God call to us; about listening to the source of life and selecting to be owned by Him.

I found myself somewhat amused in considering Luke’s narrative about the first fishing trip in the story. Most of us who have enjoyed the prospect of fishing have a tale (no pun intended) about the ‘one that got away’. And normally in the telling of the adventure the size of that elusive creature takes on gargantuan proportions. Coming home empty handed is the tragic ending of a great battle, which of course will be made right in the future. But in this telling empty nets have no excuses and there is no escaped pisces; merely tired laborers. Let us be clear that this is not a story about fishing. If it were the disciples would have been quite satisfied with the outcome of the second attempt after striking out into the deep. Make no mistake, they were drawn after something more—the desire for a successful night of fishing was far outstripped by a desire not yet met until...until they met someone who got at their deepest places.

Our desires are deeply telling about what possesses; what owns us. That is why those first questions were asked of you. Thoughts and feelings and impressions are quite temporal, but what really hooks us is found in our longings—often unmet, so we search hoping for more than we have found so far. (Not long ago I heard someone say “I have absolutely no regrets or desire for more in my life”, and I thought to myself you are the first person I ever met who said that.) The truth is

sometimes our desires are not met. Many of you know that my 'other half' has lived a life that can only be called challenging by any measure over the past five years. I want, more than words call tell, to see full restoration and a cure for her ailments, but that seems elusive. Sometimes our desires are met, but we want and sense there is more. I wanted to be a priest—not initially, but as time moved forward it was a path and vocation, I couldn't find a way of not doing. But I want more—no I don't want to be a bishop—what I mean is I want to be even more of a priest; more of a person of prayer and peace for his people; more of one who offers sacrifice of the eucharist and of praise and thanksgiving. I sense there is something more!!! The point is that even when we get our desires there may often be more lurking. Jesus told those fisherfolk to push out into the deep, because playing it safe where they were was not going to be enough. And it was only when they relinquished their weariness-what does Peter say? Lord, we have toiled all night. In other words, are you out of your mind!? –only then that what God was ready to provide broke through, and the more they were seeking was standing in front of them in the person of Jesus.

Remember those questions that we asked at the start? Why would you join yourself to another person for a lifetime? What would lead you to follow another across the trials and challenges brought on in close relationships? Hopefully, not on a whim or a gamble. Is it not more likely it was after hearing and being heard by that person you were able to risk yourself? To follow or go with another requires trust and trust means being willing to risk and to be vulnerable.

I was struck by the fact that yesterday, July 11th, is the Feast of St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order. If you don't know about him here are a few facts. He started Western monasticism over 1500 years ago. He gave order and structure to the chaos of the fall of Rome. The Benedictines started hospitals, schools and universities, brought social order to Europe, assisted with formulating currency, saved and translated Cicero and Virgil, and if you are an Anglican you need to know there would be no Prayer Book without Benedict. He established the regular reading of the Psalms and prayers as part of daily life. The reason I mention him here is that the very first sentence in his Rule for monks begins with, "Listen, Child of God, to your teacher", and later, "listen with the ear of your heart". Before we can follow anyone, or any way of life we must first listen. What does Luke tell us? "The crowd was pressing on him to hear the Word of God". There are more messages about happiness and fulfillment out there than there are cats and dogs. But when we listen to those voices, they have a hollow ring and do not illicit trust. We have to look and listen elsewhere. We need to listen for God's voice, sometime hidden in unlikely places. Let me suggest that one of the places to listen is to your own heart and soul. Do you find yourself listless, frustrated, at times empty and disappointed with your life or direction? You may find this strange, but I am going to say "Good". It may just be in those perceived negatives that you are in the process of realizing that there is something more calling you to go into the deeper waters. Perhaps there is someone whom we call Lord, who is asking us to trust him, and to stretch out and go where we wouldn't have gone without hearing his voice and Word. Jesus did not allow the disciples to run from their weariness but to see through it to something richer. I will tell you a truth; something will own us; something will create what we value; will capture our energies, and will determine where we place our fears, guilt, and our hope. Jesus invites us to let that something; that someone, be him. Once we hear, we can chose to follow and be on the pathway with Him.

I am reminded of Sir Francis Drake's prayer: Disturb us Lord when we are too well pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we have

SERMON – FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – 12 JULY 2020

St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Father Mark Menees, D.D.

arrived safely because we sailed too close to shore...Disturb us Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the waters of life...We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes, and push us into the future in strength, courage, and love. We ask this in the Name of our Captain, who is Jesus Christ. Amen+