



February 10, 2019 - If You Say So

Given by Rev. Mattei

[Luke 5:1-11](#)

Last week, we found Jesus in the synagogue, reading from the book of Isaiah to a congregation that was eager to hear his interpretation of the Word of God. The congregation's response turned from excitement to cynicism to outright physical violence wanting to throw Jesus off the cliff when he mentioned that foreigners had displayed a faith unmatched by the chosen people. This week, Jesus is talking to a congregation of fishermen and villagers who had come to the shore to buy fish from the daily catch. Luke tells us that they are eager to hear about God from the mouth of Jesus: the shore of the lake becomes an outdoors cathedral. As he begins to talk, the crowd grows to the point that he decides to climb into a boat and asks the owner, Simon Peter, to put out a little way from the shore so he wouldn't be pressed by the crowd. The owner and his crew had just finished an unproductive fishing expedition and were washing and mending their nets to get ready for the next night to start all over again, hopefully with better results.

I imagine Simon and his friends were exhausted and hungry, wanting to get done with their chores and then get home for some rest. I imagine that they were surprised by their own response to accommodate this itinerant preacher and give him some breathing space from the crowd. Probably, Simon wanted to show some gratitude to Jesus who had stopped at his house in previous days and cured his mother in law among many others ([Luke 4:38-41](#)).

Yet, Simon seems a bit skeptical at first when Jesus asks him to let down the nets again: he knows better, there is not a chance to catch anything in broad daylight! But

something inspires Simon to obey: maybe it isn't full-blown trust, yet; maybe it's simple and humble deference. What Jesus asks seems pointless, but Simon Peter's behavior is in line with that of Elizabeth and Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25.67-79), Joseph and Mary (Lk 1:26-38; 2:15-24), Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:25-38), who were willing to let go of what they knew better and experience new possibilities with God ([Isaiah 43:19](#); [Revelation 25:1-7](#); [Matthew 19:26](#)). In their obedience to Jesus' word, Simon and his partners find themselves knee deep in such a huge catch of fish that their boats begin to sink.

It's quite revealing that the call to the disciples to trust and try something new comes after witnessing Jesus' preaching, teaching and healing abilities, the practical application of his own understanding of his prophetic calling to bring about a new reality for those hungering for God's favor ([Luke 4:16-19](#)). Today's gospel is about calling each and all of us to a new and different life. And for those of us who have heard and responded to this call to let down the nets yet again, especially when we are tempted to reply that we have tried it before and didn't work, it's about doing so again. One thing is to do things the same way over and over again expecting a different result, and another is doing things trusting on Jesus' Word: the trust component makes the difference. So, when we do anything, do we ask ourselves in whose Name we do it, with what intention and attitude? Are we ready to let go of our ego (the perceived competence or lack thereof) and pray about God's will and intervention? Or is fear, self-doubt, or just plain obtuseness, keeping us from hearing and responding to God's invitation?

The fact is, no matter our hesitation or even resistance, Jesus keeps on showing up and asking us to try new things with him.

Let's look at our Values Statement:

We recognize that we are not here by chance but are gathered together to be the church of God in Christ. We recognize that God is making us, through grace, into a Fellowship that embodies and expresses the spirit of Christ. In this fellowship, the Bible says, *"there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of us are one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28). We

therefore welcome equally all people, regardless of religious office, position, possessions, education, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental ability, physical ability or other distinctions.

How is Jesus calling us to be faithful to what we say we value in new ways? How can we become more inclusive and hospitable, at worship and at fellowship, in our social outreach and evangelical efforts? How can we join in Jesus' prophetic mission of teaching, preaching and healing for the sake of the gospel? At the beginning of each brand new day, let us trust the Lord and set our intention for the day to show the face of Jesus to our neighbor, letting go of previous negative experiences and trusting that in healing and forgiving, in generous living and mutual uplifting we respond to Jesus' invitation to discipleship.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus does not care that Peter doesn't feel "holy" enough to be in Jesus' presence? Do you think Jesus waits for Peter and us to be holy, perfect, or worthy to come to our aid ([Luke 5:30-32](#))? When we think that way, guess who's not trusting us? Jesus' love thrusts us into service: the mission to heal and forgive, to live generously and sacrificially is for our own uplifting, or rising, first: trust in his Word let us live as resurrected people, free of fear, let us actualize the promises of Baptism.

And so, rise, Church, your time has come, live the promises of your Savior.