

Luke 5: 1-11

There are times when it's necessary and important to state the obvious. Now is such a time.

Question: What do Smokey the Bear, Winnie the Pooh and John the Baptist have in common?

Answer: The same middle name.

Why is the obvious so oblivious, so hard for us to see?

I have over the past few years, I have taken a cruise ship that sailed between Florida past the coast of Cuba. I have thought of the hundred miles of open water that separates the most southern tip of Florida from the most northern coast of Cuba. It's a stretch of water that has claimed hundreds of lives since the Cuban revolution. Flotillas of "boat people." These people have created desperate "boats" out of anything that might possibly float long enough to reach US soil. Why, it is obvious, these Cubans want freedom. The goal is simple: To set sail and eventually hit dry land. As long as these refugees are in the water, they considered themselves as, "Wet feet."

In 1995 the US agreed to return captured boats at sea back to Cuba or transport them to a neutral third country. The refugee would call themselves "Wet feet," if taken back to Cuba. But on occasion they would make it to Florida, they felt transformed and proudly refer to themselves, as "Dry Feet." Once on American soil, they at least stood a lesser chance to be sent back to Cuba.

The first disciples Jesus calls in Luke's gospel are "dry feet" disciples. But they didn't become dry-foot disciples until they were willing to be boat people.

They launched into deep water at Jesus' command. Once out there they see and experience things over which they have no control. Things they know with their hearts and souls are sure evidence of God's providence and sovereignty.

But their wet water witness brings them to a dry-foot transformation. The moment their boats hit the sand, Simon Peter, James, and John walk off the bow of their boats and leave them behind. The moment their feet become “dry feet,” they are transformed into disciples.

Instead of “hunters” or “fishers” they are transformed into caught-and-taught “gatherers” — “catching” living men and women with hope and love, offering them a new life with a new vision of God’s kingdom.

But here’s the catch: getting to the point of “dry feet” first requires a no-holds-barred launching into the deep.

Most of the boats used to cross that great expanse of ocean between Cuba and the US aren’t very safe and aren’t very pretty. It first takes tremendous courage and conviction to get “wet” in order to get “dry.” Like the Hebrew people who passed through the Red Sea with the armies of Pharaoh in hot pursuit, they first had to pass “through the sea” to get to the “dry land” (Exodus 14:22). They were leap-of-faith/“through the sea” wet refugees before they were “dry land” Promised Land people.

Even the most skilled sailor knows there is no such thing as a guaranteed easy passage when sailing in open waters by yourself. That is why we need god.

Yes when it comes to real life, why not go it alone? What could possibly happen when we remove God from lives and we decide to go it alone? It’s obvious. The winds can shift. Gales can blow out of nowhere. Swells can go from “light to choppy” to “8 foot swells” in a matter of minutes.

When the water, wind, and wave conditions get their dicey-est, sometimes the safest thing a savvy sailor will tell you to do is stop trying to control the ship’s every movement. Stow the sails, lighten the load, hold onto the bare essentials, and let the power of the sea and storm be the guiding force.

To the savvy sailor who finds himself or herself in that predicament say the next step is obvious. You need to pray and fully trust in God.

Why, because you are no longer the captain of your ship or your fate. And as the storms of life beat against you, you are to hold onto those Christian bare essentials, get rid of those things that weigh you down and let God take control.

One of the first lessons Jesus taught his first disciples was to give up their control to God and embrace the idea of becoming a “Dry Feet,” disciples.

In today’s gospel, Simon Peter, James, and John had another plan. They had a set schedule. It was a foolproof plan. A plan which did not involve putting their trust in God. It went something like this:

They fished at night. The water was calmer. If a storm was approaching, one could easily see the lightening in the night sky allowing them to quickly and safely head to shore.

After fishing all night, they came to shore and cleaned and repaired the nets in the morning. They rested in the afternoon. They spent evenings with their families. They went back out to fish when night fell once again.

But no matter how neat their schedule, they had one big problem: they were catching hardly any fish. The Bible says they caught barely enough to feed their families. But they were suppose to catch enough to eat and to sell. Indeed, Simon Peter, James and John had a full schedule, but their nets, their pocket books, their lives were empty.

When Jesus arrived at the edge of the water, he first changed up their morning, then “changed” the rest of their lives. When Jesus instructed them to head out into deep water and lower their nets, his advice went against all they knew as fishermen. But within minutes after listen to Jesus...within minutes of letting Jesus into their lives, their nets were filled to the bursting point. They had more of a catch than any of them had ever imagined possible.

Those full nets showed how empty their lives as well as our lives can be without Jesus. Why?

It is obvious; God has more to offer than a set schedule of daily duties, where nothing

exceptional, nothing extraordinary, nothing unexpected ever happens. When the kingdom of God washed over Simon Peter, James, and John, it nearly sank their boats so to speak.

Instead of being a fisherman or an independent businessman, Simon suddenly saw who he really was: “I am a sinful man!”

The only control Simon Peter wielded was the ability to let go, to fall on his knees, and to confess his humble humanity.

The last step Simon, James, and John ever made on their own was that step off of their boats and onto dry land. Once they had “dry feet” they turned their lives, their trust, their futures, over to Jesus. And they followed him.

Being “in control” has almost become an addiction, and not just for the Google generations. When was the last time you didn’t have some sort of “control” device in your hand or on your person? A remote. A cell phone. A laptop. I-Pad. Do you control them or do these devices control you?

What is the biggest thing keeping some of us from being full and authentic disciples of Jesus? It is when we refuse to give up our control, or more accurately, our illusion of control to Jesus. What happen next? It’s obvious. Think of your life and others you know who have allowed other things in their lives to take control them rather than Jesus.

When the 7.0 earthquake hit Port-a-Prince 2010, it took down homes, it took down the capital building, it took down the cathedral. But the most devastating takedown of all was most the cell towers were destroyed.

The electronic grid that had enabled people to communicate with each other was suddenly gone. Everyone, everywhere, was suddenly out-of-touch, out-of-control and on their own. When mudslides and drowning rains and hurricanes cascade upon unsuspecting communities, the biggest headache for emergency crews only comes about when people won’t leave their homes or evacuate areas judged to be in grave danger.

These people who stay think they are staying in charge of their property. They think they

are keeping tabs of all their “stuff.” They stay thinking they are guarding their “life,” forgetting their safety and their life is really I the Hands of Jesus.

In a sermon entitled *Who's Really in Control* by Dr. Bill Ritter, Dr. Ritter writes, “Control junkies think they can stare-down Mother Nature with some sandbags, a garden hose and a “plan.” Sure, they are afraid of losing their homes, their incomes, and their things. But the biggest fear is admitting they have lost control. Their lives are no longer in their own hands.” He continues by saying,

“That is the biggest fear haunting a control junkie, letting go of the illusion that we can grasp and guide our own lives all by ourselves.”

Okay. Let's see. Let's put it to the test. How do you know if you are a control freak?

Here are seven signs you might even call them the “Seven Beatitudes” of a control junkie:

1. You are “large and in charge.” Always and at all times give the impression you are in control. Never showing others that they are just as capable of doing the job to your specifications.
2. Are you always right; do you try to look better and more right than others?
3. Are you quick to take credit whenever things go according to plan? But when something goes wrong, you had nothing to do with it.
4. You have learned not to trust others, or do you only trust yourself?
5. Do you deny you have feelings, fears and doubts. Do you tell other to suck it up and get over it rather than offering their fears and doubts in prayer together to God?
6. Do believe there is always a right answer to every problem, and do you insist that everyone follows your right answer?
7. Do you forgive or do you hold grudges. Do you feel disputes are never resolved and

healed; disagreements and fights can continue indefinitely to add spice to life?

Even though I see myself somewhere in part of the list, committed disciples of Christ, hand over whatever control they might have to make way for the power of God, for the power of faith, and to the power of the cross.

The Beatitudes Jesus offered are still wonderful obvious examples on how to live “a Life controlled by God.”

Blessed are the poor in spirit

Blessed are those who mourn

Blessed are the meek

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Blessed are the merciful

Blessed are the pure in heart

Blessed are the peacemakers

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake

I will add one more, Blessed are those who hand over their controllers to God.

Have you handed over yours? Do you have wet feet and are you afraid to let others know that God is truly in control of your life? Can you take your hands off the controls and pause for a minute and let Jesus take control? If not, let us pray today that you allow Jesus to pull you ashore and allow you stand upon the solid rock of His salvation and come to know what was obvious to Simon Peter, James and John, that you truly can trust and obey in Our Lord Jesus to take control of your life. Amen