

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Well, this morning our Epiphany story from the Gospel of Luke, continues as Jesus uses FISH to show His power. FISH! But first I would like to take a few minutes to think about the Old Testament text of Isaiah.

One day Isaiah is in the temple in Jerusalem and he heard a call from God. We hear this is in the year in which King Uzziah died. We can only imagine that when there is a transfer of power from one King to another, it is a turbulent time. Instability and uncertainty can come with any succession. Change is in the air along with the uncertainty of chaos that a new King can bring. And so, Isaiah, in the temple, much to his surprise, sees God. He comes to Isaiah in all his glory with flowing robes that fill the temple. And surrounding the Lord are angels or seraphim that are attending Him. Talk about uncertainty. The seraphs and sang "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" Isaiah thought to himself that there must be some confusion, as he was a man of unclean lips. But there he was seeing God, when a seraph flew to him with a live coal from the altar, held by tongs. The seraph touched his mouth and said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed, and you sin is blotted out." Then the Lord asks Isaiah, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Isaiah being the only one around says, "Here am I, send me!" And so, God gave Isaiah his marching orders. This is the story of the call of Isaiah. WOW Just an aside, we will not be doing this coal thing this morning. But if you would like to talk about how God has called you during coffee hour that would be perfectly fine.

Isaiah has accepted this life changing commission. He goes on to become a major prophet in Israel. Not only does he encourage others to listen for God, but he brings the Lord's message to a people that were facing a challenging time themselves, because their King has just died.

And now on to our Gospel story where Simon Peter has a different invitation from God. This one comes from Jesus through fish. After a long night of fishing and not catching fish, Jesus comes to Simon and gets into his boat. Simon was cleaning his nets and probably very tired after a long night of working. Jesus asks Simon to go out a bit into the water. Probably supposing that Jesus was just trying to get away from the crowds that had been closing in on him, Simon agrees. Jesus continues to teach from Simon's boat. When Jesus was finished speaking to the crowds, he tells Simon to go out to deeper water and let down the nets. Simon tells Jesus that they had fished all night and caught nothing, so it was useless. But Simon does what the Jesus told him to do.

Well, we all remember the huge catch of fish that the boat tried to haul in. It was actually too much for two boats. Simon's reaction to this miracle was to bow down at Jesus feet and say, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" And everyone in witness was amazed at the catch and most likely at what Simon Peter said. And maybe even a bit confused about what had just happened. Then Jesus says to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they got to shore, Simon and his partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee left everything and followed him. Another WOW. This was the call of the first three disciples.

How was it possible that Jesus a carpenter's son could know exactly where to put down the nets to find so many fish. Never before had they seen such a catch of fish in their nets. They must have been wide eyed with wonder. Most likely awestruck, they realize how powerful Jesus is. And they get a command from Him. They are to come and follow Jesus so they can learn to catch people. Not fish to eat, but people to set free.

These two very different calls reveal a pattern of the Lord. God calls those whom He wants to, when he wants to, and how He wants to. How has God called you? And what is it that God has called you to do? What change is in effect for you this year? Both Isaiah and Simon Peter were called to fish for people. From then on, their lives would have a different purpose and have different results. Both were afraid and felt unworthy but followed God which required both risk and trust. Are you willing to risk and trust Jesus to follow as Isaiah and Simon did? Or do you let fear freeze you in time.

Simon Peter was called while doing his everyday job, fishing. His willingness to follow Jesus changed his life forever. It would change his priorities and also change the lives of others. And folks I am here to tell you that you are called to fish for men just like Simon Peter and many others in the Holy Scriptures were. And so how do we do that? We need to act. We need to follow Jesus's example. We need to put one foot in front of the other and move! We need to move to where there are fish people. And where do you suppose they are? How do we find them.

Sometimes we do spend a lot of time with one another playing cribbage or going to dinner or playing bingo. We enjoy our time at quilting or in men's group. Also, the days we help build beds is fulfilling. But think about who you are with. You are doing ministry or enjoying your free time with people of like mind, people who believe in Jesus already. Hard as it can be we need to get beyond those times and go knock on doors, invite someone to quilting or men's group that does not know Jesus. We talked about this a little bit last week. We are to bring good news for the poor, release for the captives, sight for the blind and liberation for all who are oppressed. Not easy you say. Good news for the poor can be a box of food, those that are captive to sin need to hear a word of forgiveness. Giving sight to those who are blinded by fear and cannot see Jesus need to hear His word. The oppressed need to learn that Jesus makes us a new creation every day.

But we can do none of these things unless we are around the fish people, people who don't know Jesus yet!

A quick story. You know we all have stories about our children, cute ones especially from when they were little. And remember how we would tell these stories when they were young, they would love the attention. Then when we told the same story in middle school, it was embarrassing to them. When we told the stories when they were in high school and beyond, they would leave the room. And then when they had a family of their own, the story was funny again. Well, this is one of

those stories that got bigger and better with the telling. Once upon a time there was a young boy, five years old and a dad who was a construction worker. Dad brought his son to work with him so that they could go fishing as soon as work was over. They lad sat in the back of his dad's truck all day thinking about fishing with his dad five nights in a row. But the boy could not wait, because the first afternoon, the dad looked down from the roof of the building he was working on and there his son was sitting on a bucket, fishing in a puddle in the parking lot. I'm sure it was great entertainment for all the workers on that site. (No doubt his dad was quick to tell this story over the years as his son grew up.) The father soon explained to his son that he should stop fishing in the puddle because there were no fish there. He did not criticize his son, nor did he humiliate him for casting this line into muddy water that was probably only five inches deep. He simply said that there were no fish in the puddle. The good news was that dad would take his son to a better place to cast their lines where there were fish. That made sense to the young lad. So, he waited patiently for his dad to take him to one of those best places on earth to catch "the big one".

Sometimes folks I think we fish in puddles, maybe not muddy ones but ones that have fish that have been caught already. And what fun is it to catch a saved fish, that belong to the Lord already.

I love that we can worship here in the sanctuary together every Sunday. This is the place where we meet God every week. After a long week where we are fed a steady diet of grim war news, political rhetoric, bird flu updates, aging issues, and horrific plane accidents, we need to come here to have our spirits fed and our hopes renewed with Jesus' words. Not only do we need this opportunity but there are many others out there that need a word of encourage and forgiveness. We all know that we find that in God's Word being read, sung, and preached. So why not invite someone to worship with you next week? Remember your call to fish for people and tell them the good news of Jesus.

Take up the challenge that you were prepared for during worship now that you are cleansed of your sins and given an abundant life here on earth and the promise of eternal life in heaven one day with our Lord and Savior Jesus.

So, let's all go out and fish where the fish are in Park Falls and yes Springstead and Fifield too. Don't be like the little boy casting into a puddle in the parking lot. It is more satisfying to reach out and tell people what Jesus means to you, serve their needs, comfort them with Christian love, encouraging and supporting those who are sad, scared, or depressed. No excuses accepted! Go share the God news of Jesus Christ. AMEN