

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
East Moline, Illinois  
Pastor Becky Sherwood  
**February 6, 2022, The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Epiphany**  
Psalm 138; Luke 5: 1-11  
**Let Down Your Nets**

The story of Jesus calling those first disciples to come and fish for people is a story that you, like me, may have heard many times before. I can remember learning the Sunday School song "I Will Make You Fishers of Men If You Follow Me," when I was in early grade school. Which having just passed another Birthday means that I've known this story for over 55 years.

It's a story I would have told you that I know really well...for a *really* long time.

But then this week as I spent time with the story, expecting that I would be talking to you about fishing for people, I "heard" another part of the story.

As we read in the beginning of Luke's gospel, Jesus was already teaching and doing miracles in the area around the Sea of Galilee. We know this from this morning's story. The crowd who wanted to hear him speak the word of God was so big, that he needed to be out on the water in a boat so they could see and hear him.

Simon, a fisherman who lived and worked along the Sea of Galilee, with his brother Andrew, had come to shore with his partners James and John in their boat. They were cleaning their fishing nets after a long unproductive night of fishing. The teacher Jesus asks Peter to put his boat out from the shore so he can teach.

After speaking to the crowd this carpenter and itinerant preacher and miracle worker tells Peter to go out to the deeper water and put down his nets. Peter is tired, Peter has worked all night, and while he respects Jesus, he can't help himself, he has to say it: "Master, we worked all night long and caught nothing." You can imagine what Peter must be thinking. He probably just wanted to get back to shore, clean the nets again, and go home and to sleep. And now this person who knows nothing about fishing is telling him how to fish.

But he knows who Jesus is, and he respects him, so Peter agrees to go out into the deeper water and let down the nets.

The nets fill, and fill, and fill, with fish. There are so many fish Peter and his fishing partners have to beckon to James and John to come back out with their boat. There are so many fish that their two boats are nearly sinking.

There is an abundance of fish, and overwhelming abundance of fish.

Peter is overwhelmed and falls at Jesus' feet saying: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." In his nearly sinking boat, in nets full of fish where there were no fish before, Peter is truly seeing who Jesus is, and he is feeling the contrast to his own life.

But Jesus has a plan for Peter and says to him, "do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

Then Peter and Andrew, and James and John leave their boats on the shore and follow Jesus.

Jesus invited Peter to go out into the deeper water and let down his nets, and this is the part of the story where I was caught this week. (Pun unintended) This is the part of the story where I want to invite you to join me.

Faith is a journey that lasts a lifetime. At different times and different seasons Jesus invites us to new pathways on the journey. This morning's story tells us that sometimes Jesus invites us to come to the deep waters, the deeper places and let down our nets.

This story leaves us with a question:

Where, in your journey of life and faith, is the deep water for you?

Where are the unfished depths in your heart and life that Jesus may be calling you to explore?

Where are you being called to deepen your searching in the life of faith?

Is there a place you think you already know, a place you've already been, a place you've already fished, where Jesus is inviting you to let down your nets and fish in a new way?

Do you have excuses like Peter did, that keep you from the deep water?

Where is Jesus inviting you to trust him enough to come to the deep water and let down your nets?

Where are you being invited into the unpredictability, and the unknown, of the deep water?

The hope and promise of this story are that Jesus may have a surprising abundance waiting for us in the journey of faith, that we could not have even imagined before we entered the deep water.

I'm not talking about an abundance of wealth or possessions. That's not Jesus' gospel. I'm talking about an abundance of life-changing, heart-changing gifts that Jesus is offering us.

The promise of coming into the deep waters and letting down our nets with Jesus is that we will be changed.

Things may rise from the depths that we could not have imagined.

I'd like to suggest that Jesus' words to Peter: "Do not be afraid," are for us, as we trust him enough to enter the unpredictability and the unknown of the deep waters in our hearts and lives.

Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid to see more of who Jesus is in your life.

Do not be afraid to listen for his voice.

Do not be afraid to risk the unknown.

Do not be afraid to be changed.

Do not be afraid to come to the deep places and let down your nets.

Jesus is there in the deep places.

Do not be afraid.

The other promise of this story is that as we take the risk of entering the deep waters and letting down our nets, the ways that we will be changed will allow us to help catch people for the kingdom of God.

This story tells us that there was an abundance of fish in the deep places, and overwhelming abundance of fish.

What if you let yourself listen to Jesus' call to you this day?

Come to the deep waters, the deep places, and let down your nets.

Jesus who offers abundant love, and surprising change, is waiting for *you* there.