

The Lord's Message: A Fisherman's Story

Date: January 30, 2022

Where: Tilghman United Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Luke 5:1-11

During this Season of Epiphany, we have been learning about Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God. What better way to learn about this than from an eyewitness account of one who was with Jesus for three years during Jesus' earthly ministry. I was thinking of Simon Peter, disciples of Jesus. What if we were to interview Peter about his decision to follow Jesus?

Let us pray.

I will play the part of Peter and Larry will be the interviewer.

So, tell us Peter how did you come to the decision to follow Jesus?

Peter responds, "It was not a decision but a calling."

I do not follow. What is the difference between a decision and a calling?

Peter responds, "A decision is a personal preference. A calling is an invitation of God to ministry. A decision is like I would like vanilla ice cream instead of chocolate. A calling is God saying to you, do you see that child over there, go and buy some ice cream for them. This church has just installed all of these people into their various positions and ministries. All of these people have been called by God to serve Him. There are many others that are doing other ministries and they have been called by God as well."

I am starting to see your point of view or exactly God's point of view on this calling. So, tell us Peter about your calling.

Peter responds, "I remember like it was yesterday. Myself along with my partners James and John had been out in boats all night fishing. We had not caught anything. We tried laying the nets in different locations, but no fish. It was frustrating. The sun was beginning to rise, so we made the decision to go into shore and call it a day or night (however you want to interpret it.) We got into shore and began the process of securing the boats and cleaning up the nets, so that they could dry. As we are starting the process, a man came down with a group of people.

I recognized Him immediately, this was Jesus. I first met Jesus when my younger brother Andrew introduced Him to me. There was something different about this man. I later heard Him preach in the synagogue in Capernaum. I was in awe of what He was saying about the Kingdom of God. I had heard synagogue rulers and others talk about the Kingdom of God, but they talked about it as if it would happen in the distant future. Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God as occurring now.

As Jesus was walking out of the synagogue, He encounter crazy Azriel. Azriel was possessed by a demon. When Jesus walked by, Azriel called out 'Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!'

Jesus sternly said, 'Be quiet and come out of him.' Azriel shook violently and fell on the ground. Jesus then reached down and helped him up. Azriel was different. He was not longer screaming and hollering. He was no longer filled with rage, but had a peaceful demeanor. He kept saying, "Thank you, Thank you God.'

Wow, I am sure that you were in awe of what Jesus had done.

I was awestruck and many with me were awestruck as well. I was thinking to myself if Jesus could heal Azriel maybe Jesus could heal my mother-in law would has been running a high fever for many days.

Before the thought even came to me, Jesus is standing next to me and saying to me, 'Peter let us go to your house and heal your mother-in law of her fever.' I could not say anything but 'yes.'

We made the walk with a crowd following us. When we got to my house, Jesus asked the crowd to stay outside. Jesus went in to my mother-in law's room and started praying to God to remove this fever. I can not tell you how Jesus did it, but the fever was gone. My mother-in law was so grateful that she started preparing a meal. I was so overcome with joy that I started shouting and praising God. I went out into the crowds and explain what had just happened. Most people in the crowd knew my mother-in law and knew how sick she was and they started shouting and praising God.

It was not too long after that people started to bring in others who were sick. Jesus prayed and laid His hands on them and they were cured immediately. This went on until sunset and Jesus finally dismissed them and told them to go home. Sometime early in the morning, Jesus left my home. I figured that might be the last that I would see of Him.

Was this the last time that you saw Jesus?

No. Several days later, I encountered Jesus again. This time it would change my life forever.

Like I said earlier, we had been out in the boat and had caught nothing. We were completely frustrated and all we wanted to do was to clean up the boat and nets and go home have breakfast and go to bed.

As we are in the process of cleaning up the boat and the nets, I see Jesus coming down to the shore. Of course, there is a large crowd following Jesus.

As Jesus was talking the crowd started to grow. Jesus said to me, "Simon, I need to use your boat." I said, "The boat is yours." I can not believe that these words came out of my mouth. Jesus got in the boat and sat down. His next instruction was, "Now push the boat out a little way from the shore." So, I told the men in the boat with me to do as He asked. Once we were situated, He began where He left off with teaching the crowd about the kingdom of God. I was completely engrossed in His teaching. I listened to every word that He said.

After He finished His teachings, He dismissed the crowds with God's blessings. He told me "Put out into deep waters and let down the nets for a catch." I told Him, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." So, we let down the nets. As I pulled the nets back up, these nets were unusually heavy. We must have snagged the nets on something on the bottom. But as we pulled the nets up closer to the boat, I could tell there was a huge mass of fish in the nets. Now, I was afraid that the nets were going to be torn to pieces. You know how costly it is to have good equipment. I did not want to damage the net and I did not want to lose this catch of fish.

That is some catch!

The biggest that I have ever seen. So, I started calling James and John to help with the catch. Soon the other men on the boat were shouting the same thing. James and John with their crew headed out to us and maneuvered their boat on the other side of the net. We both started pulling the net in and taking the fish out of the net and putting them in the boats. This was hard work. There were so many fish that our boats started to sink. Never had this remotely happened to me. I was completely astonished at this huge catch of fish. I looked and saw Jesus smiling at me. I knew this was only possible because of this man, this Man of God. I was so overcome with emotions that I fell at his feet and cried out, "Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man."

Jesus said to me, in the most calming voice, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will fish for people." God was calling me and God was also calling James and John. I, James and John, knew what we had to do. We said 'Yes to God.' We pulled the boats up on the shore and turned them over to our crews and followed Jesus. We are still following Jesus today.

Thank you, Peter for this interview. Now, we throw it back to Pastor Dave.

Not only were the fishermen Peter, James and John called, but Jesus called tax collectors, rebels, treasurers and thieves. We do not know the occupation of the others. Jesus also called women of nobility, women of working class, women who had been cured of evil spirits. Jesus called them all and Jesus is still calling them today.

We have learned that Jesus is not king of the Jews or king of the Gentiles, but King of All. We have also learned that God confirmed Jesus as His Son. We are all loved by God and that if we believe in Jesus, then we are all one in the family of God. We have the evidence that Jesus is God's Son by the miracles. Now, we have the testimony of a man that was called by Jesus to follow Him. The proof is the people's response to the call of God to follow Jesus. That proof is still evident today. God is calling you. How will you respond to God's call? Amen.