

Nets In the Deeper Water

Luke 5:1-11

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

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You yourself may have said, or you may have heard someone else say something like, (1) “The heart of my faith is ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.’” Or, (2) “The heart of my faith is, ‘Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’” Or, (3) “The heart of my faith is, ‘Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.’” Each of those is a legitimate expression of faith. Yet, if such possibilities are the heart of a person’s faith, *what is generated* from the heart? What’s the yield of a heart “on the right track”? Or, what’s the yield of a heart “strong in the Lord”?

Undoubtedly, each child, youth, and adult, each son, daughter, brother, sister, parent, cousin, neighbor, stranger, foreigner, and enemy is precious in God’s sight. Luke’s story about Jesus, in chapter 5, tells us that, yes, and then tells us more.

Luke, chapter 5, tells us that these fishermen at work, laboring long, sweat-filled, sometimes successful, sometimes not successful days and nights – that these fishermen – are persons Jesus genuinely respects and admires as human beings. He approaches them; and without requiring or asking them to complete an application, or to submit a resume, he invites. They are invited because they are precious in his sight. They are also challenged by Jesus.

It is wonderful to understand Jesus as the one who, with God’s Spirit, loves us so much that we are invited to be part of those following him. It is wonderful to be convinced that God’s love in Jesus is at the heart of our lives. It is wonderful, but it is not enough. It’s great to be loved and invited, responding, “Yes,” to the invitation; and it’s great to follow Jesus joyfully or gratefully, or to follow him however you characterize your following. Yet in Luke, chapter 5, Jesus makes a point of saying, “Beyond having your heart conditioned by the love of God for following me, I ask something more: throw your nets into the deep water.”

Today is Scout Sunday, and it’s the 100th anniversary of the founding of Scouting in the United States. As a once-upon-a-time Scout, I learned by experience much that has been helpful to me today as an adult. I learned how to camp, how to start a campfire, how to cook and clean up, how to get along with and how to accomplish work with Scouts very different from each other. I learned how to hike with a full backpack, how to determine directions, how to identify and look for poison ivy and poisonous snakes, how to right a capsized canoe in the water. Some of that required risking, moving outside a young teen’s “comfort zone.” Going outside one’s comfort zone is somewhat like casting nets into deeper waters.

It’s certainly possible that church and faith communities can learn and benefit from Scouting and from other institutions which value “raising the bar of difficulty and challenge” in order to fulfill personal and organizational goals. Similarly, following Jesus’ instruction to cast nets into deep waters has a challenging and comprehensive

effect for Jesus' first disciples, and, since then, for Scouts, and for everyone who has never been part of Scouting organizations.

When Jesus says, "To those of you who consider being my close followers, it is not enough even for you to fish all night. It is not enough for your routine to be faithfully followed. It is not enough to have at the heart of your faith, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,' or, to have at the heart of your faith, 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so,' or, to have at the heart of your faith, 'Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.'" It would not be enough, either, only to have a (1) mental comprehension or (2) to have an "inward heart" for faith-allegiance to a concept of Jesus. **What more is necessary?** (1) Putting the self to work "in deeper waters;" (2) putting the church to work "in deeper waters;" and (3) engaging and partnering with the larger community to work "in deeper waters."

If nets are thrown into deeper waters, what defines or describes "deeper water"? Last year, a Country singer named Billy Currington recorded a song entitled, "God Is Great, Beer Is Good, and People Are Crazy." That's not what I want to say about "fishing in deeper waters." Using similar phrasing, however, we can say that "fishing in deeper waters," leads us to experience and recognize: (1) Life is challenging. (2) Discipleship following Jesus is complex. (3) The call from God for persons to live by faith and trust is constant. (4) The gracious relationship God establishes with God's people is eternal. One more time: (1) Life is challenging. (2) Discipleship following Jesus is complex. (3) The call from God for persons to live by faith and trust is constant. (4) The gracious relationship God establishes with God's people is eternal.

When you're out there in the challenges and complexities, and when you answer the constant call to be on a journey in redeeming love through your life for God's world, you will hear that voice, and you will recognize its Speaker, maybe even this morning, or this week. And while you may have recently or even years ago said, (1) "The heart of my faith is 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,'" or, (2) "The heart of my faith is, 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so,'" or, (3) "The heart of my faith is, 'Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.'" All of that is legitimate, EXCEPT that Jesus would never have us stop with what we say and think.

Placing nets in deeper waters, we will daily realize how: (1) Life is challenging. (2) Discipleship following Jesus is complex. (3) The call from God for persons to live by faith and trust is constant. (4) The gracious relationship God establishes with God's people is eternal.

Having recognized Jesus' voice, and knowing of his personal life, ministry, death, and resurrection, won't you and I, like disciples long, long ago, put out our nets and the nets of the church – of Jesus' Church – and keep fishing there as Jesus recommends? I can't imagine why we would not. Can you?

– All honor and praise be to God.