

The fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
Feb 6, 2022
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Lord grant us a miracle

In the gospel this week, we encounter a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. Prior to this, we witnessed in our hearing his audacious preaching in the temple, his proclamation of the scriptures being fulfilled in the people's hearing. He's moved out of the temple and on towards the lakeside.

Tension is ratcheting up as he moves now among the crowds . True, he will be back in the synagogue again; but the time is coming when the door of the synagogue will be shut to him and his church will be the lakeside and the open road and his pulpit a boat. He would go anywhere where people would listen to him. ¹

Let us look at some examples from the Epistle an gospel today:

[1] Paul confesses his unlikely conversion experience after Jesus presents himself on the road to Emmaus. This causes him to completely change

¹ William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke - The New Daily Study Bible Westminster John Knox Press, pp66-67

the course of his life as a response to receiving this grace. He claims himself the least of the apostles due to his persecution of the church. But the Risen Jesus changed the course of his life in this miracle. Now as a witness to faith by grace, Paul's faith is handed down to the church in Corinth. He handed on to these early Christians in turn what he had received: the confession of Christ dying, buried and raised. This becomes our creedal statement beginning with "We believe". Our liturgy and tradition hands our faith forward by our professing and by our stories of experience; our witnessing that faith. ²

[2] Like Paul, Simon Peter is the one we know as the doubter. After a full day or laborious fishing, the disciples begin to clean their nets and call it a day. Jesus takes notice and approaches them getting into a boat and begins to preach to the crowds. Imagine the fatigue and disappointment of the disciples after all this effort.

Peter is a model of faith to us in that despite fatigue and doubt, he is prepared to try again. Many people in life will give up one attempt too soon. The conditions for the miracle of the catch are put in motion by the Spirit. The spirit attempts what seems to be hopeless. Circumstances of the

² Luke Timothy Johnson Sacra Pagina- The Gospel of Luke - The Liturgical Press - pp 87-91

night suggest that the favor of a profitable catch was well beyond the disciples. Yet, listen to Peter! “Let circumstances be what they may, YET IF YOU SAY SO...we will try again. Is that not the ultimate testimony of faith? This is in part how our relationship to God responds. We listen for the call. We experience hesitation, fatigue and resistance.

Peter’s exhaustion is also our exhaustion in many ways of our daily context. Too often we give up because we think circumstances haven’t lined up perfectly. We lack the courage to begin. Hear Jesus bids an attempt at the impossible. Can this gospel account lead us into a deeper trust in God, a more robust obedience and openness to listen?

The response of grace is the bounty of the catch. Wouldn’t that then be the ultimate gift? Jesus provided abundance in a scenario of scarcity.

Aside from exorcisms and healings, this miracle demonstrates a dramatic and personally directed display of the dynamics at work in him. He knows ahead of time what will happen and the outcome is overwhelming fulfillment. This story testifies to the motivation and commitment that Peter and his companions will become netters of people.

Peter is immediately able to walk away from this profitable trade as a result. Jesus is designating Jesus as Master and Lord.

This doesn’t happen before Peter tells Jesus to leave him as he is a sinner.

Peter as sinner represents to us one of the categories of people who respond with faith to the prophet's visitation. Understand this to mean that Peter is not a sinner explicitly in moral terms but as one who "gets" or is converted by the awe - the attractiveness of Jesus' power as opposed to the fear of judgement. This witness initiates Peter's ability to follow instead of departing. He leaves behind with the others to follow Jesus. Here again you will hear me use the term metanoia, a turning about or change of heart symbolizing the conversion experience of Peter in this gospel story. This is a sharp come about is a change of life to follow Jesus.³

[3] Scripture takeaway.

Imagine yourself in the context of an average day. It could be a frustrating day of challenge or indulgent day of relaxing. Jesus show up.

He wants to assist you in your endeavors, be it laundry, cooking, shopping, caretaking. Use all of your senses to create this scene. What are you up to? Where are you? What is going on around you in terms of activities and other people? As a team you and Jesus knock it out of the ball park!

³ ibid

He also now asks you to follow him, to be like Peter, a fisher of people. What form does that take? What can you imagine beyond the norm of everyday experience?

This my friends is a call. We all have them, and I will say that we have them from Jesus - his spirit. What does this call look like; what form does it take? Some are more recognizable than others..I would say, perhaps your friend, or a person who demonstrates a situation that needs to be attended to, like transportation, or assistance with an astronomical heat bill. Some people derive great comfort when we show up with companionship or support during a difficult time. I've sat through many a dinner with my husband as coach offered stories of support and direction to kids who had terribly disrupted home lives, where the practices and events were the grounding center of their lives. We can find ourselves in unexpected places where Jesus shows up, places , if we're paying attention, life changes. This may not be drastically but in small subtle ways that add up over time.

Lastly, we give thanks to the Lord for his saving grace. Psalm 138 leaves us with profound gratitude ; gratitude to continue increasing the strength and response of our souls. Despite and perhaps in spite of our earthly

expectations, we can trust ultimately in God's provision. ⁴ For God is not coincidental - "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21

⁴ Reflection words inspired by : *The Vine: Rooted in Love Feb 4, 2022* - St. Mark's Episcopal Church Marco Island, Fla.