

**Sermon – Feb 10, 2019 - “Yet, if you say so...”**

**Luke 5:1-11**

5Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

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<sup>5</sup>Simon was doubtful, “Master, he said, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets...

Despite his doubts, Simon did what Jesus asked..., because he trusted Jesus and his life changed forever. After this encounter, Simon, with James and John his partners, left their boats to be fishers of men with our Lord Jesus.

Have **you** ever been asked to do something you had doubts about doing? I have a friend Sally who is a teacher.

One year, at the start of the term, another teacher confided that he was breaking out in cold sweats during his Grade 12 Human Biology class because he felt inadequate and unable to teach human it.

Sally, was teaching a math class during that same period. She knew the other teacher could teach math no problem. Should they swap? But Sally had tried teaching Biology before and it had not been a good experience. Before long, the principal asked Sally whether she'd switch and take over the Biology class for the other teacher. Her doubts were strong. It was a risk ... but she liked her principal and she felt for the stressed teacher...and so... she decided to give it a whirl.

Why did Sally say ‘yes’? It was because she cared for the other teacher and trusted her principal. She knew he would not ask her to do something she could not do. And she knew that she might benefit...she might really like teaching Grade 12 Biology...and she did, more than she imagined!

In today’s Gospel, Simon Peter, faces a similar choice. Jesus asks him to put out into the deep water and to let down his nets. Simon had already been out all night and hadn’t caught a thing. But...Simon says to Jesus...

**if you say so, I will let down the nets.** Simon surrenders his own well-informed opinion and does what Jesus asks. Why because he trusted Jesus. So he did what he asked, even though he didn’t understand.

Simon’s decision to do what Jesus asked was a turning point in his life. Simon encountered huge abundance – his nets overflowed with fish. It was startling. He had to call for help. He realized that this man in the boat with him was no ordinary man. He realized that this man Jesus had mysterious powers as well as a compelling presence. He had to follow him and leave

everything. From that day, Simon Peter's life was changed. It was defined by Jesus...and wherever Jesus went, so too did Simon Peter.

Is each of **us** called, just like Simon Peter? I think each of us **is** called. Our challenge is to notice and respond to the call. I think our Lord wants to define and shape each of us, exactly as Simon Peter was. Maybe our biggest challenge is to hear Jesus' call and to **trust** enough to respond. Sometimes, as with Peter, what we're called to do may not make sense. Hearing the call is a challenge because there are so many **other** voices calling. Hearing the call is a challenge because it requires a response from us; getting out of our 'comfort zone', launching out into deep waters and sometimes we just don't want to respond. Fishing for people, evangelism...these are scary topics for some of us, for a lot of us.

Suddenly I thought of the BELLS book we have been talking about around the Diocese since the last Synod. Michael Frost, an Australian, wrote this little book – outlining a 'simple idea to foster missional habits in our lives.' The purpose of these habits is while uniting us together as believers, they also send us out into the lives of others. – fishing for people.

He suggests 5 habits of Highly Missional People. They are Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn and Sent, together forming the word BELLS. It is a very popular book, I think because it suggests lots of ways we can 'reach out', ...making mission seem 'doable'.

The author of this book, Michael Frost, is coming to our Diocese for 2 special days June 14 and 15. More details will follow.

Each of the five habits is designed to release a certain value in our lives. If you bless people, you will become more generous. If you eat with others you will develop greater hospitality. If you listen to the Holy Spirit, you will become a more Spirit led person. If you learn about Christ, you will become more like Christ. If you see yourself as sent, you will be a missionary in your own neighbourhood.

The core of evangelism is simply to go into the world as ambassadors of Christ or to be fishers of people as our Gospel says.

The five habits help us do that in a kind of natural way. Let's look at them each briefly:

**Bless** – means to speak well of, to praise, to make happy. So the book suggests ways we can bless are by words of affirmation, acts of kindness, and gifts. So far, good? This we could do, yes? So we are to bless three people this week, at least one of whom is not from your church. Next is one most of us love and that is

**Eat** – Eating has been a central practice since the beginning followers of Christ. Hospitality, when we meet one another's needs with generosity and interact with one another is the way mission works. The author, Michael Frost claims eating together isn't just good missional strategy, it is a way to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. In Luke 7 it says "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." That was his method, so it makes sense that it would be ours. So the direction at the end of the Eat chapter is to eat with three people this week, at least one of whom is not from your church.

**Listen for the Spirit's Voice** – We need a period of time each week to step out of the busyness and be quiet. Joshua and Roy Serle of the Northumbrian Community in Northern England write:

If we regard hospitality as a missional imperative, ... solitude, silence and prayer will sustain our commitment to hospitality, giving substance and authenticity... The Spirit might bring to mind the name of a person you are to bless or eat with. So we are to spend at least one period a week listening for the Spirit's voice.

**Learning** – What would Jesus want us to think, be, hear and do right now in the present? The author believes we need to be immersed in the Gospels. C. S. Lewis writes that "It says in the Bible that the whole universe was made for Christ and that everything is to be gathered together in Him."

**Sent** – The final habit is journaling, identifying yourself as a missionary, someone who is sent, by journaling. Why journaling? Michael Frost writes that "It is a recognized spiritual discipline... This will be more than writing "I shared Christ with someone today." Or "I treated a confused student kindly today." It will be about helping you sort through the myriad everyday ways you operate as God's ambassador in the world.

I hope you don't feel overwhelmed. I have just thrown all 5 habits at you at once. Hopefully some things will jump out at you. Focus on what jumps out at you. We can't suddenly engage in all the activities. But we can begin to awaken to possibilities, to ways of being. We can try just one

thing...maybe blessing just one person with a surprise gift, or words of affirmation or eating with one person outside your circle, just once. It is a challenge, as Simon Peter was challenged. Let us join hands with Simon Peter...our ancient cousin...and launch out into the deep water together to experience our Lord's abundance! Amen.