

Last week we launched into a 5-week series called: ‘Gone Fishing’. For 5 of the 6 Sundays in Lent, we’re looking at 5 ‘fish tales’ told in the 4 NT Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

You may recall that in last week’s reading from Luke 5, Jesus commandeered a boat belonging to a fisherman named Simon. Later in that story, Jesus tells Simon to let down his nets in deep water for a catch and the amount of fish Simon hauls in, is extraordinary. As soon as they arrive back on shore with the abundant catch, Jesus invites Simon to follow him and “fish for people” and so Simon and his brother and two partners leave everything behind to follow Jesus.

The gospel reading this morning is a different telling of the same incident. But, for some reason, Matthew does *not* include Luke’s story about Jesus teaching crowds by the seashore, nor does he describe a stupendous catch as the precursor to Jesus’ invitation that Simon to follow him and ‘fish for people.’

According to Matthew 4:12-13, Jesus moves to Capernaum after his cousin John is arrested by King Herod. And then, by-and-by, walking alongside the water’s edge one day, Jesus see Simon and his brother casting their nets into the sea. Jesus shouts to them from the shore: “Come, follow me and I will show you how to fish for people.” (Matt. 4:19)

If we compare these verses from Matthew to Mark 1:16-20, we see that Matthew and Mark are almost exactly alike in telling us how Jesus called the first disciples. The fourth gospel, John, is the only one that doesn’t include any form of the ‘fishers of people’ story.

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Because Matthew, Mark, and Luke have so much in common, scholars refer to these 3 gospels as the ‘synoptic gospels’: syn-, meaning ‘same’, optic’ meaning ‘lens’ or ‘view’. While there are some differences, Matthew, Mark and Luke are very much alike. John’s gospel on the other hand, is *way different* than all of them.

What is unique about this story in both Matthew and Mark, is both use the word ‘immediately’, or ‘at once’, to describe how the first disciples’ react to Jesus’ call. As I said last week, rarely does

anyone respond to a ‘call’ as enthusiastically this, so don’t feel bad if your response to Jesus’ call has not been as unequivocal. Indeed, a close reading of both Matthew and Luke suggests that Simon and his brother Andrew probably had a relationship with Jesus *before* he called them away from their fishing business.

But, if we stick with Matthew and Mark’s versions of this story, I wonder what might’ve caused these two sets of brothers, Simon-Peter and Andrew, and James and John, to respond so emphatically as these Gospels describe?

As you think about that, I want to share a 15-second audio clip with you. (AUDIO.) Do any idea what that was? Better yet, any idea how old that sound might be? That is thought to be what a katydid sounded like many, *many* years ago. (A katydid is a cricket-like creature that makes noise by rubbing its forewings together. So it’s an insect very much like a cicada.) ***But that katydid chirp... the one we just heard... is thought to be 165 million years old.*** (Isn’t it amazing to have audio that old?)

A few years ago, I ran across a story in *Smithsonian* magazine about a katydid fossil that had been found in northeastern China, perfectly preserved in stone. By studying the shape and size of the wings, and comparing them to modern katydids, a researcher in ‘paleo-acoustics’ (that’s right, ‘paleo-acoustics’!) used a computer program to reproduce the sound most likely made by this 4-inch prehistoric katydid. However, this 165-million-year-old katydid chirped at a much lower frequency than modern katydids.

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When I read about that prehistoric katydid, I began to ponder the question I posed a couple minutes ago: what was it about Jesus’ call that led his first disciples to respond so completely? What did Jesus’ voice actually sound like when he told these fishermen: “Come follow me. I will make you fishers of people”? Wouldn’t you love to hear what Jesus’ voice actually sounded like as he said many of the things recorded in the gospels, because we know that tone of voice can make such a difference!

Jesus would have been speaking in Aramaic, we know that! But, would it make a difference to us

today, if we had some way to generate and recreate the actual sound and tone of Jesus' voice? And then this makes me wonder if some of the challenges we face in responding to Jesus' call, is that we just can't hear his voice in the same way his first followers did?

I have to think so, because it's clear to me that when Jesus said, "Come follow me," he really wanted us to pattern our lives upon his teachings and example. He really wanted us to live and love as courageously as he did. That is what it means to follow him! There's a meme on the internet where Jesus is seated at a park bench telling a young man: "When I said, 'Follow me' I didn't mean on Twitter."

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In his book, *Your Church is Too Safe*, Mark Buchanan writes: "At some point [in our history] we stopped calling Christians disciples and started calling them believers. A disciple is one who follows and imitates Jesus. She loses her life in order to find it. She steeps in the language and culture of Christ until his Word and his world reshape hers, redefines her, changes from the inside out how she sees and thinks and dreams and, finally, lives. A believer, not so. A believe can hold certain beliefs, but how deep down these go depends on the weather or her mood. She can get defensive about her beliefs, but in her honest moments she wonders why [her beliefs] have made such scant difference in her life."

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One of the ways I think we struggle to follow Jesus (even as we say we 'believe' in him) is by failing to share God's abundant love with others because we've become accustomed to the idea that faith is about having a 'personal saving relationship' with Jesus. While there's truth to the idea that faith is personal; it absolutely NOT true that faith is private...

A devotion I read earlier this week says it this way, "When you become a disciple of Jesus Christ, you becoming a follower of a "Way" of living. It is a way of generosity and community, not selfishness and isolation."

As this story from Matthew reveals, not even the Savior of the Universe acts as a lone ranger. No,

he *called followers who would join together in a community of adventurous faith and service.*

In Luke, in chapter 10, Jesus sends out 72 disciples, telling them to seek out (and I quote) 'people of peace' with whom they can share the gospel. Here's what I invite you to do: I want you to begin to pray that God will reveal to you a 'person of peace' who needs you to reach out -- and into -- their lives. Pray that God would help you follow Jesus by sharing your story of faith with people who deserve to know about the gracious, merciful, and compassionate God you've come to know. This may be someone in your own household! It may be someone who's been burned (or bored) by previous church experiences, but who'd be blessed to know that you belong to a community that's following Christ into a relationship with a God whose love is total, absolute, and forever.

Praying in this way, I think, is the key to getting ourselves onto the right 'frequency' so that we can hear and respond to voice of the One who calls us lay down the nets we're clinging to, so that we can follow him and fish for people. Amen.