

Sermon: Where did all those fish come from?

February 10, 2019 Deseronto-Grace Pastoral Charge

Luke 5:1-11

Isaiah 6:1-13

Epiphany 5, Year C

Simon knew he was in big trouble as soon as he saw all those fish. So many fish! Enough to weigh down 2 boats! They had to struggle to keep the boats from being swamped, keeping the gunwales barely above water. All those fish! He had never seen anything like it.

Where did those fish come from? Simon and the James and John had been out fishing all night, and they hadn't caught a thing. There were no fish that night. That's how fishing goes. Simon and James and John had been fishing their whole lives. Sometimes they would have a really good night, and sometimes they would have a poor night. It's just part of the business. It usually evens out in the end.

So that morning, when they pulled their boats up on shore, their plan was to clean the nets, like they did every morning, go up to their homes, have a bite to eat, and then get some sleep. They sat beside their boats, cleaning things up for the next night, yakking away about this and that. The morning sky was clear, and it looked like it was going to be a nice, sunny day.

Then some people came along the path to the shore. They weren't the usual type of people who would come looking to buy some fresh fish in the mornings. This crowd was different. There were some neighbours, folks they knew, plus a whole lot of people they didn't know, some well dressed people too. Soon there was quite a crowd, surrounding the boats where Simon and James and John were sitting, trying to finish their work for the day. The crowd ignored them.

Simon asked someone what was going on, and was told, "Jesus. It's Jesus."

"Ahh," thought Simon. "Jesus, the healer." Simon had seen Jesus do a miracle, not too long before. His mother in law had been sick, and was running a

high fever. Just when they were realizing that all of their supposed remedies were not working, and she was not getting better, who should walk in the door but Jesus. Jesus went right over to the bed where Simon's mother-in-law was lying, and it was like he spoke to the fever, and told the fever to get out of there. Within a few minutes, his mother-in-law was sitting up, and a few moments later, she asked Jesus if he would like a drink of water. Simon was rather stunned about how quickly it all happened. He had been nervous around Jesus ever since. What kind of person could do this kind of thing?

So this day, beside the water, when Simon heard it was Jesus in the middle of this crowd, he just sat still, hoping that he would not be noticed in the midst of the crowd. No such luck. You see, Jesus walked right up to him, and asked if he could use Simon's boat for a little while. He wanted to teach from it, get out from shore just a little ways, so that the crowd would not pushing in on him so much.

Simon was pretty much finished cleaning up for the day, so he agreed. He and James and John pushed the boat out into the water, with Jesus as their passenger. Simon kept the boat steady, while Jesus spoke to the people back on shore. Jesus told some stories, and told people how they were supposed to behave, and be good to one another. He talked about how God is generous, and how God gives good things to his children. "Well," thought Simon, "That's like what the psalms say...God's steadfast love and faithfulness, right?" Simon felt Jesus made a lot of sense.

When he had finished talking, Jesus suddenly looked over at Simon who was dozing off in the stern, and told him to put out into the deep water, and put down his nets. Simon just looked at him without saying anything. They had fished all night, and caught nothing. It was now the middle of the day, when there are never fish to be caught. What in the world did Jesus know about fishing? Simon had been looking forward to a nap, and they had put away their nets for the day. Why in the world would they go fishing now?

Later on, when Simon told the story, he could never explain why he did what Jesus told him to do. But that's when the miracle happened.

They went out farther into the lake, put down their nets, and suddenly they had so many fish, the nets were ripping apart. Simon called to James and John in the other boat to help them, and when they pulled in the catch, there were so many fish, the boats sank low in the water, and they worried they might sink.

It was then that Simon realized something weird was going on. This was no ordinary catch. That was no ordinary teacher sitting there in his boat, watching as calm as anything. Simon suddenly felt very afraid. If Jesus could make fish appear where there weren't any, what else could he do? What else **would** he do? Simon's mind suddenly flashed to a bit of holy scripture, when the angels call to one another, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts." Was this what holiness feels like? He did not want to be in the presence of so much holiness! He felt a shiver of fear go up his spine. He knew everything there was to know about fishing. This was not normal fishing.

Simon flung himself at Jesus' knees, and cried, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Jesus did not react, but calmly suggested he should get the boat into shore.

Once they were on shore, Simon and James and John just stared at each other. There were more fish in their boats than they had ever seen before at one time, and all three of them knew this was impossible.

"What just happened out there?" said John. He looked stunned.

James said, "I guess God wants us to be rich today." James always knew how to make a joke. "This man is looking after us," he continued, "Sending us so many fish. He must be a prophet."

Simon looked over at Jesus who was climbing out of the boat. He thought about his mother-in-law, back home, probably cleaning lentils for supper, she who had been so sick until Jesus came along. He looked down at that huge catch of fish where there ought to have been no fish. "Holy, Holy, Holy," echoed again in his head. He started to shake again. Was this man truly a great prophet?

When Jesus came over to where the fishermen were standing, Simon took a step backward; he didn't mean to. It just happened. What sort of man was this? Jesus simply said, "Do not be afraid, Simon. Really, you don't have to be afraid. From now on, you will be catching people."

"What in the world does Jesus mean by that?" Simon wondered. He had no idea. But he knew one thing – no fish, suddenly fish. Abundance unheard of. Over-flowing abundance, ridiculous abundance. So, almost without talking about it, they decided, Simon and James and John, all three of them. They left their boats, and went with Jesus. What else could they do?

What else would **Jesus** do?