

Sermon Luke 5 1 11 5th Sunday after Trinity 1 Year Series

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Text: Luke 5:1-11 (vv.8,10b): “When Peter saw this, he felt at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’... Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’”

Theme: The Holy Ministry

Goal: To show how God chooses His ministers and how He enables them.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: St. Thomas is about to say Goodbye to one minister and to welcome a new pastor. What kind of evaluation will be done about the seven years I ministered here: What worked well? What didn’t work? What expectations were not achieved? – What are the expectations about the new pastor and his family? Will the members just sit down and observe what will happen, criticizing what is not according to their way of thinking? Or will they engage to his work and common challenges?

The readings for today present three different ministers and three different situations they faced: Elijah, Paul, and Peter – three heroes of the Bible! But they had their weaknesses. And, maybe, just because they were weak, God called them to be His ministers and enabled them to serve Him and His people. – Due to the particular time St. Thomas is facing, I think it is appropriate to talk a little bit about the Holy Ministry.

I – Elijah

The Old Testament reading presents Elijah in the worst time of his life. After the big event when he called fire from heaven and he prayed for rain, he had to run away far into the wilderness because the Queen wanted to kill him. He even wanted to die and asked God: “I have enough, Lord. Take my life; I am not

better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4). *Elijah is burned out on his career as a prophet... (Phil Brandt, p.12). He was weary, he did not think his work was achieving anything, he was discouraged. But God had hope for him. There was success he could not see, there was help he did not look for. There was still a purpose and journey to take. God was not done with him, nor was God angry with Elijah despite Elijah’s apparent frustration with God and the foolish accusations he hurled heavenward. God patiently and lovingly deals with his servant here. (Phil Brandt, p.19).*

Do you think a pastor can burn out? Is this not a lack of faith?... A Lutheran professional counselor, analyzing this episode and how God handled with Elijah, ... said this is the only thing to do with burned-out people. You first get them out of the situation, change the scenery; then you get them some help for the seemingly enormous task before them...so they don’t feel so overwhelmed. Finally, you help them see and celebrate the effectiveness of their work. God sends Elijah on a long journey, ... He gets him three people to help him, and that is described quite effectively; and then he tells him about 7000 people who have listened. His work has not been in vain. (Phil Brandt, pp.15,16).

One of Elijah’ helpers chosen by God was Elisha. He was the son of a prosperous farmer. When he was called, he left everything, and even burnt *his bridges behind him. The oxen were slaughtered and the plough served as fuel for the fire of their sacrifice. There is no going back... Total career change at this point in his life.* (Phil Brandt, p. 17).

As a second carrier pastor, Elisha left everything behind him to follow God’s call, - like Peter when he left his nets full of fish and followed Jesus.

II – Paul

When Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians, his ministry had been questioned. Was he really an apostle on the same level as Peter and the others? Also: Another preacher had come to Corinth, and he was a much more eloquent preacher than Paul. His name was Apollos, a good friend of Paul. The church Paul had founded was divided and struggling because one group preferred this pastor, the other one favored the other pastor... Paul became upset with this situation, and he challenged the church: “Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). And then he reaffirms the core of His preaching and the core of the Christian teaching: “We preach Christ crucified... the power of God and the wisdom of God... For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23,24; 2:2). And it seems that the congregation in Corinth accepted Paul’s admonition and came back to the Christian unity again.

Paul had prepared himself to serve his church from childhood. But his church was wrong in its teaching and didn’t accept the Messiah. But God had other plans for Paul, and called him on his way to Damascus to become the greatest missionary ever! He left everything behind him, even considering all rubbish, to follow Christ. (Philippians 3:7-11).

III – Peter

Peter was a rough fisherman from Galilee, one of the most despised provinces of Palestine during Jesus’ time. He went to listen to the preaching of John the Baptist, and probably was also baptized by him. His brother Andrew heard when John pointed to Jesus and said: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1: 29). And Andrew went to his brother Simon Peter and told him, “We have found the Messiah! And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:41,42).

After this, they met again at the shore of Galilee's sea. We heard the Gospel for today what happened: How the fishermen had tried to catch some fish during all the night and haven't caught anything; how Jesus sat down in one of the boats to teach the people on the shore from the boat; and how the miraculous catch of fish happened.

When Peter saw what had happened, he became so afraid of the presence of Jesus, that he fell down and asked Him to go away, because he was a sinner. Jesus just replied: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men... and Peter left everything and followed him."

Peter was also a second carrier person, who was called by Jesus, and that became the leader of the Twelve Apostles. He committed several mistakes during his training classes with Jesus, and even at the beginning of his ministry. Even so, God enabled him to be His servant and to call many to faith in Jesus.

Conclusion: The tools God gives to His ministers to catch people to His Kingdom seem to be fragile: Just one Book, some water, a piece of bread and a little wine. The people Jesus choose to be His ministers are not exceptional people, saints or taken from a special cast or group. They are ordinary people. But they are called by God and enabled by Him to preach the Gospel and to share the Sacraments. He will fill the nets. The work belongs to Him. The promise comes from the gracious and powerful God. We can only trust and support His work.

This is not a farewell sermon, or an auto-analyzes of my time as pastor at St. Thomas. These are just some examples how God worked and still works through people like you and me to reach His goal to call people from darkness and from a meaningless life to his light and to His kingdom, by trusting in Jesus and by following Him. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 16 July 2017