

Gone Fishing...

Luke 5:1-11

Isaiah 6:1-8

Imagine the situation for Simon's point of view...

It's been one of **those** nights.

Ok, they happen every so often,
don't they,
and that's quite simply life.

Sometimes we work hard
and have little to show for it,
but the empty nets
and hungry stomachs.

On these nights
we return home
hoping against hope
that we have enough put aside
from those better days
in order to see us through –
to feed the children
so they can grow,
feed the wife
who spends her days
looking after the little ones.

On these nights
we return home
hoping against hope,
it does not happen too often
because then we can cope.

And then...
well, then along comes this guy,
from a family so poor
they are labourers –
can you believe that?
yet he sure has the gift of the gab
and the crowds press around to hear him.

He tells a few yarns,
and a good tale or two –
you know the sort,
a story that makes people laugh
and then makes them think.

They are sure enjoying this,
the idle crowds with nothing better to do,
but at least it's a distraction
while checking the nets
for any snags or breaks
that need to be mended
before the next night's fishing.

The crowds press in
to hear the witty preacher
just that bit better
and this labourer's boy
asks to use the boat
as an impromptu stage.

Well, why not?
It didn't do anything much
and won't need much time
to get it ready again.

And then what –
he asks to go out fishing again?

Doesn't he know the fish are caught at night?

Doesn't he appreciate
how long and hard we worked
for nothing?

He's having us on –
this labourer boy –
who is the expert here?

Well, let's humour him...

Help!
I need help
from others who have to know-how
and the tools
of fishing.

The nets are full
and I can hardly haul them further;
the boat is full
and it is starting to sink;
it is full to overflowing with fish.

Our mates come over
laughing and pulling on the nets
also amazed at this catch of fish
that was so different from what we had before.

At last we are back on the shore
and he looks at me –
this preacher man –
follow me, he says,
and I will make you fish for me.

Well, why not?

The nets are torn beyond repair,
the boat needs a lot of work –
it will be many nights before I can fish again.

Something tells me that if I follow
there will be enough,

even when I least expect it.

Reflection

The irony in today's Gospel reading is not about the unexpected abundance, but that this creates havoc! One of the commentators I read asked the question of whether perhaps Simon follows Jesus because his old life has been destroyed in that overflow of fish. He had already lost everything, so that made it easier to move on.

And what of us? What do we have that ties us to the past rather than helps us look to a future? What will it take to get us beyond those things that keep us back?

Traditions in themselves are not "bad" or "wrong," but when the traditions become more important than the ideas they are communicating, we have something of a problem.

What does it take for us to follow? Last week we talked about how the sense of call looks so clear in biblical times, but it is hard to know when we are called today. We no longer get the vision of the temple or the "follow me" on the shores of the lake to point us in the right direction.

I think there's some comfort in how virtually every prophet, and almost every disciple reacted to that call – a "who me, no you're mistaken, you must mean someone else!" We are not the first to do this, and I am quite sure, we will not be the last. But each of the prophets, and each of the disciples, were somehow convinced they were called to their task. What does it take to convince us of our calling?

In some ways, today, we start a new era as we develop new traditions about how we do church because there is something here that has changed – the new screens (and thanks to everyone who had donated). Some people will find this challenging, or different, or even not like it. Sometimes this will be for a practical reason, but it also gives us a new way of moving forward and engaging people differently. The message of God's love is the same, but with each generation we change how that message is presented.