

"Sounds Fishy to Me"
October 28, 2018

Luke 5:1-11

Pastor Cathy L Hamblin
Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

Ephesians 3:17-21

I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love,
I ask that you'll have the power to grasp love's width and length, height and depth, together with all believers.

I ask that you'll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always.

Prayer of Invocation

Lord, Open us to all that you would have us be, for you and for others.

'Breakthrough' into our lives and our church with new possibilities.

Amen.

The Word Luke 5:1-11

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets.

Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch." **Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing.**

But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.

When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught.

James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people."

As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Living the Word

It is a miracle story. Jesus goes to the lake. He borrows a boat to use as a soapbox to speak to the crowd. After he gets done speaking, he invites the fishermen to go out once more for more fishing. Reluctantly they go and are soon shocked by the number of fish in their nets. Peter, James and John, are amazed at the fish and Simon Peter feels unworthy of this miracle. Jesus recruits them to go be his disciples.

Why is this story here? It is toward the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He is becoming fairly well known for his miracles of healing and his inspiring speeches. He is now ready to start training some disciples for the work of the future.

I first want to say that any good fisher-person knows that there are peak hours each day and night for fishing and peak hours for fishing don't always happen at the same time every 24 hour period. Had the fishermen checked the Farmer's Almanac before they went out they may have done better. Jesus probably had an inside track on the peak fishing hours for that day.

Yes, and no. It was a miracle. These fishermen were not fishing for fun. They did this every day – or every night as the case may be. This was their work, their livelihood. It was what they knew and so when this preacher/healer suggests that they 'Go back to work,' it isn't an easily fulfilled request.

Personally, I like it when God calls me to go fishing or go back fishing. But after a long day of work, I am not so anxious to be called back for a trip to the hospital during the night or ready to write one more newspaper article. Yet that is often the time I see breakthrough miracles happen. Not always the expected or hoped for miracles, but things only a loving God could come up with breaking through in ways I didn't see coming.

These fishermen don't see the miracle coming, they don't believe it when it arrives, and they don't feel they deserve it when it is laid out in front of them.

They didn't see it coming. God's Word lived among them, in the midst of their everyday lives. It called and pulled and then pushed them out to the world. These were everyday, common fishermen waiting for God to send a Messiah to free them in their lives. How many that day didn't see, didn't listen, didn't recognize God's Word alive, in the man before them, Jesus?

We live in a time when it is difficult to see the breakthroughs. We don't know what we are to look for...and yet they are available to us all around. For example: We began the Old Testament Class on September 12 with 11 participants. The first two weeks we moved through Genesis and on to Abraham and his promise to give God 1./10th of all he received. In worship after the second class I shared a Children's message with 10 apples and talked about the possibility of each of us tithing. It clicked for me that God had timed them together.

We moved on. In the OT Class we studied Exodus with Moses' story, there have been questions I couldn't readily answer so I have challenged them to do some research. As I began to prep the Sunday morning Bible study on Moses, that began this morning, there was an example, with potential solutions of one of those questions from the OT Bible Study. I schedule things, yet God coordinates them with surprises and wonder for me.

We are called to live in watchful, hopeful expectation of what God is doing right in front of us. God's Word still lives among us. Many don't believe that the miracles happen. They may see them, but they discount them as a freak or a fluke. They label them 'luck.' Why did that person receive? 'Just lucky I guess.' Many people come face to face with their own limits and give up, not allowing the miracle to happen before them, and missing the blessing. How many people today are just going through the motions of life and work, unwilling to do any more than the bare minimum and then not quite getting to where the miracle begins?

Even so, Jesus comes into their midst, gets in the fishermen's boat, and sits down in the fish smell, and the fish slime and the wet and he taught from there. He didn't stand before the people. He sat in the spot where a fisherman had been sitting to do the work only shortly before. That is what makes the miracle believable. It isn't hocus-pocus. Jesus lets them know he is with them where they are at.

Believing, means change and more work. He showed them he was willing to get down and dirty in order to do his work. If they hadn't trusted Jesus, they wouldn't have believed the miracles they saw before them. Believing that it is God's work we see, comes with a ready knowledge of who God is. If we believe in God's miracles and breakthroughs, identifying God as the source of all good things, we then begin to watch for the breakthroughs and believe that the miracles are of God.

Jesus pushes us to our potential. He can take us past our ability to a higher place. Jesus encourages us to see beyond where we have looked before. Do you believe in that? Isn't that a miracle?

And so the miracle arrives...two boats of fish, after a night of empty nets. Who are we to deserve this? God's grace, that unconditional love, doesn't wait for you to deserve it. Payment for the work isn't always at the end of the job. Sometimes it is encouragement along the way and sometimes it seems like it comes as incentive, before we even begin.

In fact, God's grace can't be earned. Those fishermen didn't earn the fish, and they weren't being prepaid for work they would do in the future. God was giving them a picture of their potential as great fishermen. Just as God showed Moses the number of his descendants by pointing to the stars; Jesus was now revealing a view of the numbers of people waiting to be caught in the nets of God's grace.

What was God thinking? These were calloused briny fishermen, what did they know about caring for a Messiah, living on the land and leading people back to God? Yet God is faithful, going with them every step of the way as they move into the ministry before them.

Just as God is good at catching us and then freeing us from our nets...Encourages us to be more, to do more. The Holy Spirit takes the gifts and skills we have been given and developed and offers us places to use them; ideas that we could not even imagine on our own.

As a child, did Barak Obama say 'Someday I'm going to be president' and some well meaning adult replied: "That's nice dear." Did Mother Theresa once say 'Someday I am going to help as many people as I can' and a voice came back: "of course you will." I am not sure about those cases, but I know one well:

Cathy, age 9, having just given my first speech for 4-H. I may not have said it aloud, but thought: 'Someday I am going to speak in front of a big group of people.' I even envisioned what it would look like, though, in fact I didn't define who the group would be in front of me. I did not imagine the church. There were not many women in the pulpit then to be an example for me.

My 9-year-old brain saw a one-time audience who might listen to me... And, here I am and it has happened more than one time over that past 25 years. Who am I to deny the miracles of God that have come to me as breakthroughs, one after another for all of those years? It isn't about deserving them or earning them.

It **is** about living into the potential that God has for each of us. The Holy Spirit guides us to the place of our passion, gives us a yearning inside to develop that passion and then takes us out of the norm, beyond the ordinary, to use our passion in the world.

At first the disciples were overwhelmed by the fish, and then three of them left all that they knew, for a totally different catch – one of people. Two boats of fishermen, three were called and followed. To live in abundance, means to reach even beyond that abundance. It is not what you have, but what you do with what you have. "Lord, you have come to the lakeshore looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones. You only asked me to follow humbly."

It all "sounds fishy to me." That isn't said because fish make a distinct sound that we are relating to. In fact fish are actually quite quiet, as animals go. If something sounds fishy, it means we think it sounds like a 'big fish story;' an exaggeration of the norm, to the point it is hard to believe.

When we were first married, my husband Bob would tell me he had to go fishing to feed the family. While it was true, it did sound a little fishy to me. Then a number of years later, I asked why the fish supply was dwindling as the years went by, though the time it took for fishing continued to be steady. He then instructed me that they were Musky fishing and fishing conservation and etiquette included 'catch and release' of the fish.

That also sounded fishy to me! So Bob began to take me along with him and now I understand much more fully about catch and release fishing. The wait and amount of casts to catch the elusive Musky can be daunting, yet when one hits there is great excitement. Even so the fish is handled with a gentle hand, brought into the boat, measured and photographed, and then set gently back into the water and held until the fish is ready to swim away.

God is into 'catch and release.' God sent Jesus to draw us in, to instruct and love us wherever we are at and then gently releases us back out into the world to swim alongside each other as Disciples of Christ. It is then our choice of staying in the boat or giving up who we were to follow Jesus. Life is then altered forever. "O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me, and while smiling, have spoken my name. Now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me; by your side I will seek other seas."

Today we are celebrating the Ministry of this church: Worship –the care of our Spirit; Nurture & Care – the care of our body; Education – the care of our mind. All of these work in differing ways to make us Disciples of Christ. We are caught, taught, and cared for and then sent out – our fourth Ministry: Outreach – giving our heart.

Here are the places you have listed (so far) on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall: Hayward Hospital Medical Records, Ruby's Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Fishing Without Borders, Sawyer County 4-H, Salvation Army, Search & Rescue, Nursing Home Services, SCOPE – Sawyer County Outdoor Projects & Education,

Humane Society Shelter, Sawyer County Youth Police Academy, COLA - Water Quality Monitor, Lions Club, Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust, Food Shelf, Fishin Has No Boundaries, Community Contata, Sawyer County Emergency Response, Library, Birkie, Sawyer County Medical Reserve Corp.

Humane Society Thrift Store, Community Supper, Money to many organizations, St Francis Mission School, Hayward Rotary, Veteran's History Project, Operation Christmas...

If that sounds fishy to you, it may be that it is exactly how a miracle could be described as well: an exaggeration of the norm, to the point it is hard to believe. We should question things that sound fishy to us, considering the source ... God wants us to recognize that God is the source of the miracles around us. God's Word spoken, heard and heeded; looking beyond our knowledge; Trusting with hope.

On a month to month basis we are caught to do the administration of the business of church through Trustees, Ad Council, Staff Parish and other work teams, but the we are sent out beyond this building in every direction so we can do God's work in the world. Like our day job and our Real job. Love God (the spire), Love Others (in every direction).

What might God be saying to you today? Where is God meeting you this morning? Jesus is willing to sit with you wherever you are at right now and then take you some place new.

(Re-Introduce the Prayer Cards – ask for prayers each day at 8am &/or 8pm.)

Eye on God ... Sent out - remember that we go out together as a community of faith into the world, guided by the Spirit. Are you open to God breaking through into your life? Are you prepared for the miraculous abundance God has for you?

**PRAY: Lord, Open us to all that you would have us be, for you and for others.
'Breakthrough' into our lives and our church with new possibilities. Amen.**