

5 One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. 2 Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. 3 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. 4 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."

5 Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

6 So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. 7 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.

8 When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!"

9 Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. 10 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." 11 As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus. -Common English Bible

When I was in my first call, there was a lovely couple in the church who were not members of the church, but who were regular worship participants. I would often invite them to join in an inquirers' class to explore the possibility of membership or to participate in Bible Study or some other small group study opportunity, and every time the wife in this couple would say, "That sounds fabulous. Some day I hope to have time for such things." Some day.

We all do it from time to time, right? Putting off until later, some day, what could be done today. Often, what we put off is attention to that which would be most life-giving for us, to the particular gifts in us, the particular calls on our hearts, the fire within. And we have good reasons... full calendars. Financial pressures. The demands of earthly bosses. Dishes to wash, diapers to change. Exhaustion. Most of us have a lot on our plates, many draws on our attention, time, and energy. For many of us, our interior spaces are cluttered with anxieties, fears, disappointments, and grief.

There's always something to distract us, pull us away from God's call to us. We too say, with a bit of longing, "some day."

I heard someone say once that "later" is not a point in time. She said this to motivate chronic procrastinators. I think, in a way, our Gospel reading offers the same message. We jumped over stories about Jesus' ministry in Capernaum, where he healed many people and cast out many demons. It was in the synagogue in Capernaum that Jesus first met Simon (aka Peter). He went to stay with him and he healed Simon's mother-in-law.

Where we picked up today Jesus has arrived at the shores of Lake Gennesaret, aka the Sea of Galilee. He was trying to move on to carry the Gospel to other communities, but a crowd followed him. A crowd pressed in on him. He scanned the shore line and saw some fisherfolk cleaning their nets after a long, unproductive night of fishing. Among the fisherfolk was a familiar face, Simon. So he climbs into Simon's boat and asks Simon to row out a bit from shore. Remember, Simon's been working all night, he could have protested. But he does exactly what Jesus asks. Jesus gets a bit of distance from the crowd and then does what he most wants to do for people... he teaches them. Probably teaches them about God's intentions for liberation if his sermon in Nazareth is a reliable taste of his early teachings, but we don't know what he taught that day. We just know that he did. And at some point he was done. Maybe the crowd dispersed, maybe he had said all he had to say.

He proposes to Simon that he row out into deep water and put down his nets for a catch. Now this might sound reasonable to us— they are in a boat, on a lake, they have a net, why not? Well... Simon gives us one reason. They, the professional fisherfolk, had been working hard all night, fishing all night long and caught nothing. He doesn't say this, but we know, they have just finished cleaning their nets; it's time for rest. And he also doesn't say, but scholars tell me, that they as professionals know that their linen nets are reflective and highly ineffective in day light, generally they fished in darkness in shallow waters. So... heading out, midday, to deep water? This

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was crazy talk. Simon had several sound reasons to say no— exhaustion and expertise chief among them. He could have said, “Come back later, Jesus...” But instead he says “But because you say so, I’ll drop the nets.” Not later. Now. No matter how foolish it seemed.

And then follows the greatest catch of his career, surely. So many fish it nearly broke his net. So many fish he signaled his business partners to come and join him with their nets. Both boats were filled to nearly overflowing, nearly sinking, loaded down with flopping fish. Surely this catch would financially secure them for a good while. This was a miracle of abundance; it was indeed a miracle— they knew it didn’t make any earthly sense.

Simon is staggered. He’s in awe. He responds as people often do when they encounter God— by confessing his sinfulness. Do you remember the call of Isaiah which we read last fall? How he was overcome by a vision in the temple to which he responded “Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.” Do you remember all of Moses’ protests when God called to him through a burning bush? He went on and on about his limitations. Often when people encounter the holy, they realize their frailty, their finitude, their brokenness, their sin. We can feel unworthy of such a visitation. We might even let this sense of unworthiness push away the holy that has come near. Simon tried, “Leave me, Lord,” he said, “for I am a sinner.”

But when God wants to encounter us, God is not deterred by our impressive expertise, by our reasonable delays, by our humble withdrawal. God finds a way to reach us. For Moses a burning bush out where he was keeping his sheep, for Isaiah cherubim and seraphim in the temple, for Simon a heck of a lot of fish. God comes to us where we are, blesses us with abundance where we are, with something we can understand, so we know that God is a God of abundant life, that God supplies, that God is with us.

And if we pay attention, if we let ourselves be amazed, all distractions will fall away. Later, some day... will fade away. There is just today. No one would fault Simon and his crew if they had said, "Jesus, let us have a day or two to process all these fish and sell them at the market." But that is not what happens. They leave everything... their boats, their nets, and the flopping fish in them on the shore and follow Jesus. They do so in the moment, without delay, in the only moment they have, in the now.

There is so much in the now crying out for the loving attention of our merciful God. So many people feeling vulnerable and exposed. So many lacking basic needs for survival. So much pain, fear, and grief. If we are Christ's body on earth, then our mission is to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, liberate the oppressed. That's the call, for now. Not tomorrow. Not some day. Now.

I wish for all of us encounters with the holy that prompt us to let go, to step outside the grind of our earthly economy, into the grace of God's economy, to let some day be today. We have been claimed by a mighty and generous God; let us follow that God more closely TODAY, and in all the nows to come.

Sources in addition to scripture that influenced or were cited in this sermon:
Amy Robertson and Robert Williamson Jr. "Episode 221: Leaving it All Behind (Luke 5:1-11)" on *Bible Worm* podcast. <https://www.biblewormpodcast.com/e/episode-221-leaving-it-all-behind-luke-51-11/>

I heard Suzanne Stabile say that later is not a point in time on her podcast *TheEnneagram Journey*. I do not know on which episode. <https://www.theenneagramjourney.org/>