

A Homily by
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“Peter – the fisherman and teacher”
Luke 5:1-11
8 o'clock, May 5, 2013

Simon Peter was a human, a very human being. When he saw the miracle that Jesus performed while fishing, he fell to his knees and said “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Yet Jesus affirmed Peter’s calling to be a disciple when he told him “Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Peter had called Jesus “Master” – teacher, but then he called Jesus “Lord” because Peter believed him. And Peter was willing to follow Jesus, even though he knew how every human he was – even though he knew that he might fail. He was willing to learn to “catch” people. The Greek word for the verb to catch is *zogron* and was commonly used to mean to teach. Teachers fished for – they caught their students. And just so Peter (and James and John) would catch people to bring them to new life. And when these fishermen “forsook all” – when they left everything – to follow Jesus, they were entirely committed to their new lives as fishermen of people – as teachers – called to catch new believers.

We ourselves were given a new life when we committed ourselves to Christ. In our baptisms we promised to do the same as the disciples – to bring the Gospel to all people – to fish for people – to bring them to know Christ.

We might ask how can we really do this? We are only human, and we have not had first hand experience of the teacher – of the Master. And, we are flawed. We are human. But so was Simon Peter. Peter would even deny the Lord three times. He would run away and hide after Jesus was crucified. Yet it was Peter on whom the church would be built. It was Peter’s destiny to bring new life. And that is what we are about as well.

How do we go about catching people? What bait would we use? Well, God’s word is sufficient. So we have to come to know God’s word. That is why we hear the word every week. And we are to have more than a passing familiarity with God’s word.

A fisherman knows the waters. So too we must know our culture, the culture of the world we are to fish in. Where might we fish for people? In a local coffee house? In the

library? At school? We must be prepared to fish with skill using the right equipment – the right rod and reel. As a child I would fish with a cane pole, but the world is much more sophisticated, and the fish are smarter now, I think. But more than any thing else, a fisherman must know patience. We must wait for an opportune time and be prepared to listen with an open heart. We have the best bait. We can learn the ways of the fish we want to catch. We have to trust –as Peter did – that there are fish to be caught. If we learn about the fish, when the best time to fish might be, what the fish like to eat, and such, then we have a better chance of catching them – of teaching them – of converting their hearts. And above all we must be patient – we must be committed to the long haul.

All of us Christians – old and young – men and women – Biblically educated and Biblically challenged – are called to be disciples. We are called to fish for people. Remember that Peter was just a regular guy. But he still was and is a good model for discipleship. Peter was doing what he regularly did. He was on the shore washing out his nets after fishing all day. And it had been a really bad day. He had been “skunked” as fishermen say when they have been out all day in the hot sun and caught nothing. (Well, we too have had really bad days before.) He spoke plainly and boldly to Jesus when he told him that going out after catching nothing all day didn’t sound like such a good idea. (Haven’t we resisted God calling out to us from time to time? When we were tired and frustrated?) When Peter realized that he was in the presence of someone with supernatural powers, he knew he was out of his league and told Jesus he was not worthy when he said “ I am a sinful man – not like you, Lord!” (How often do we say we are unworthy?)

So can we be like Peter? Can the Lord use us – regular Joes like us – to bring the Word of God to the people – to fish for them – to teach them – to catch them? Peter became the rock on which the Christian church was founded. He was a simple fisherman turned teacher – meant to catch people with the word of God as bait. God’s word is that powerful. And the world needs the power of God. Jesus needed the help of these fishermen. The potential catch is so large that God needs many fishermen – people like us

– just regular people like us – who together can live out the Gospel for others to hear and see. May we be that prophetic community that fishes for people.

Lord, may it be so. Amen.