**5th Sunday OT C; February 6th, 2022**

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8; Psalm 138: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

Peter was a small business owner, a blue collar fisherman just trying to make a living for his family. He had just worked a frustrating all-night shift and had caught nothing. Peter was minding his own business, washing his nets, while Jesus was speaking about God to a nearby crowd. The crowd presses in on Jesus to better see and hear him. Jesus steps into Peter’s world, his boat, and asks him to put out some distance from the shore so he can use his boat as a pulpit to teach the crowds. Thanks to the natural acoustics of the water, the crowd is capable of hearing Jesus. He must have been saying something they found important and applicable to their lives. Peter couldn’t help hearing what Jesus was saying, after all, they were in the same boat. When Jesus is finished speaking, he asks Peter to do something totally irrational to a professional fisherman; maybe Peter was just humoring him. But Jesus’ words moved Peter, “Put out into the deep and lower your nets for a catch…,” and he does it.

How many of us can identify with Peter’s life; a working person whose life is frustrating and experiencing failures? Into that life and world, Jesus enters with a word that draws people to himself. Peter hears that word and responds to it and discovers that his life bears fruit, the kind a fisherman would recognize as a huge catch.

This story is about Jesus addressing a person in the midst of a busy day and that person responding to him. Peter knew Jesus understood his world. Peter goes from his indirection and failure to purpose and bounty in his life. He realizes what has happened and decides to follow the one who can catch fish for him and even more; him whose words bear life. Jesus now has other fish to capture; beginning with Peter and his companions. He uses the same net to catch these men as he used to catch the fish—His word. These men may feel unworthy, but if they trust, not in themselves but in Jesus’ word, they will be catching people. So relying not upon themselves but upon the Word, they cast aside their hesitations and follow Jesus.

Our lives are busy. There’s things that concern us and keep our minds racing at night which are not superficial matters, but things we need to tend to. Usually, there aren’t quick and easy solutions to those important issues we face. These are the times we need to keep our heads about us and focus on our priorities and the direction where we are going. In these inevitable dark periods of our lives we want to continue to hear Jesus’ invitation to follow him.

The way it turned out, Peter’s busy life was a **listening** place for him. After his frustrating all-nighter without a fish being caught, and while he was cleaning his nets, he **heard** Jesus speak. At first he **hears** Jesus as one among many who were around the lake that day. That’s the same way we **hear** the Word of God, as a community during this liturgical celebration; one among many like the crowd on the lakeshore. It is in a communal setting that Peter heard his **personal** call. Together we **hear** Christ address us and call us to be his “fishing church.” A “fishing church” that reaches out to the lost and confused to offer them direction and a place of acceptance.

Peter also heard Jesus speak directly to him in the midst of his busy life with an invitation to follow him. Our daily life is like Peter’s fishing boat where our personal listening place exists. But we will need to be attentive to what we experience and hear each day; so we have to listen up. How do we do that? When we complete a chore or a task can we take a pause and ask what next Lord? Can we find ways to apply the Scriptures we read and hear to our lives? Can we begin each day resolved to find Christ and listen to him while we work?

Success is not a guarantee for those who accept Jesus’ invitation. We may not come up with two boat loads of fish. Jesus doesn’t give details about what the new lives of the disciples will be like. How will they catch people? Where will this uncharted “fishing trip” journey take them? There’s lots of questions it seems we would want answered before signing a lifetime contract. Instead, Jesus offers Peter, and us, his presence on an adventurous journey. We will not be on our own, we will have one another and He will be in our midst. When we lose our confidence after working hard with fruitless labor, He will continue to speak his word to reassure us.

Isaiah, Paul and Peter had at least three things in common; each received an invitation from God to serve Him; all three men felt unworthy to be called by God for their mission; and yet despite their self-doubts, all three accepted God’s personal call. Isaiah thought he was doomed to die for seeing the glory of the Lord. He had unclean lips, but God purged his sin when the angel came and touched the hot ember to his mouth. He responds, “Here I am,--Send me.” Paul lamented the blood of the murdered Christians on his hands. But through his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul’s hostility toward Christians was turned into a passion for spreading the Gospel to the pagan world. Peter, by his own admission, was a sinful man and begged Christ to leave him.

The unworthiness of this trio, and ours, is not an obstacle for God! God chooses ordinary and unworthy people like us to do extraordinary things. God has destined each one of us to change the course of history through a mission that could leave an eternal mark on the destinies of others. Will we play it safe, preferring to read about the exploits of others who left behind their self-doubt and answered the call to catch others for Christ? Our mission depends not on us, but on the Word of God who is calling and sending. Whether we feel worthy or not, in the midst of our daily lives, we can pray and trust our call and say, “Here I am,--Send me.