**Crossings Text Study Group – All Are Welcome!**

**Wednesday Mornings at 9:30 A.M.**

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

Dear Friends: This week’s text is Luke 5:1-11. It is set in Galilee with Jesus standing beside the lake of Gennesaret (aka the Sea of Galilee) being “pressed in” between the crowd and the lake by the people eager to hear “the word of God” he has to say. The term “crowd” is important. The crowd in Luke designates all those who are of special concern to Jesus. They are the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed that Jesus noted in his inaugural address (4:18-19), those who are eager “to hear the word of God” (5:1). They are out there ready to be “fished.”

As it so happens, Jesus also sees along the shore two boats and some fisherman washing their nets. And what do you know? One was Simon (Peter) whose home Jesus had just visited and whose mother-in-law he had just healed (4:38-39). Why he wasn’t with the crowd, we don’t know. But what we do know is that Jesus will enlist him into his service. So Jesus asks him to pull out from the shore a ways so he can carry out his purpose of “preaching the good news” (cf. 4:18-19).

Luke doesn’t tell us here what Jesus said. The scene is rather a backdrop for what happens next. Jesus uses of the image of fishing as a metaphor or object lesson for discipleship. The back and forth discussion between Jesus and Simon Peter about fishing is meant to be instructive to the church – then and now – about its work to be “fishers for people,” aka evangelists, those who are sent by Jesus to proclaim the “word of God,” aka Jesus Christ.

That the disciples are cleaning their nets is a sign of their problem: they have given up on fishing. The evidence? When Jesus asks them to put their nets into the water again Peter says, “Master, we have worked all night long but caught no fish.” He has nothing to show for his work. How easy it is for the church to become discouraged in its calling to be “fishers” and give up.

What happens next is important. In spite of his frustration, Peter, at the command of Jesus puts his net again into the water. And behold, the catch of fish is so great that the boats are about to be sunk and Peter and his cohorts could hardly haul it in. What does this mean? It means that Jesus is the “master” of fishing and that Jesus is the one in charge of the catch. What’s more, it means that we don’t stop fishing (preaching the gospel) until Jesus tells us, that is, until he comes again. We, the disciples of Jesus fish for people, not because we always get results – sometimes we do, sometimes we don’t – but because Jesus, who is the master in charge of the results, has asked us to.

When this “lesson” first sinks into Peter’s craw, he is not only “amazed” at the catch but ashamed of himself. For he falls on his knees and says the truth: “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinner.” In effect, Peter is saying, “Jesus, why do you even want someone like me around? Why don’t you just give up on me as I (will) tend to give up on you? Why don’t you just go away from me?” Shades of the Peter we will see on the night of Jesus’ betrayal (See 22:54-62).

But that is not Jesus’ way. And so Jesus says to Peter, “Do not be afraid.” Here we see that giving up on Peter – or any one of his disciples – is simply not in the cards for Jesus. Indeed, as Peter – and all of us – will soon learn, Jesus will go all the way to the cross for us. Our sin cannot cast him away from us. On the contrary, it is because of our sin that he comes to us.

Yet, we dare not minimize just how much danger Peter and we are in when we out of “fear of our sin” are tempted to cast Jesus away. In those moments we are on the verge of being lost to God. (See Luke's parables of the lot sheep, the coin and the lost son in Luke 15.) But again, that is not what Jesus wants! And to prevent that Jesus will enlists every disciple in his fishery to proclaim his “fear not.” And he means to employ his disciples not only for fellow floundering disciples, but for every person who is part of the crowd.

Therefore, the good news of Jesus to his disciples does not end with the words “do not be afraid,” but with the words, “from now on you will be catching people.” Jesus proclaims good news to sinners so that they can proclaim that same good news to fellow sinners. No wonder, as the text ends, we see this amazing sight. Peter, along with his cohorts (James and John, who also got caught by Jesus) are seen “leaving everything” to “follow him.” What is that “everything” they are “leaving behind”? Why—the fear of their sin, of course. And to where do they follow him? Why—right through the cross to the crowds, of course, who are eager to hear from them – from us disciples, too – the word of God.

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**Wednesdays -- 9:30-11 a.m.**

Crossings has developed a visual model for organizing the message of a particular biblical text based on the simple idea of distinguishing law and gospel, God’s own diagnosis of what ails us and God’s own prescription of what heals us.  The model is useful for everyone, both those who listen to and those who proclaim the text, because it helps to remind us what to focus on and listen for in the process of reading and understanding a biblical text and relating or crossing it into our daily life.

Who: Anyone interested in studying the Bible – clergy and lay, preachers and listeners

What: We will learn the Crossing Method by using it on the texts that everyone will hear on Sunday Morning

Questions? Email me or call me at 262-642-6303

For more Info on Crossings go to [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)

I look forward to exploring the Scriptures with you together,

Peace,

Steve Kuhl

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