

Reflection for June 14, 2026 – The Journey Inspired by Matthew 4: 18-25

The journey, this journey has been amazing. Confusing, difficult, incredible, scary, life-giving, humbling, painful and joy filled too. There have been Ah Ha moments, OMG moments, what the... he** am I doing moments, you have to be joking moments, “I can’t believe I am doing this” moments and many more kinds of moments than I can recall. But if I had the chance to do it all over again, I would jump in with both feet in a second. And so it is that I give great thanks to that prophet that walked across my path and said, “come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”

Of course I didn’t listen very well at first. I guess I wasn’t ready for a lesson in Hebrew. That is at least in part because of my stubborn streak I told you about last time. I wasn’t about to be led down the garden path by what I thought was a fictional character, that Jesus who could make blind men see, heal the leper and raise someone from the grave. No, not me. I’m not that gullible I thought.

What kind of crazy story is today’s gospel reading? A stranger comes down to the lakeshore and says, “hey guys, follow me. I have got something for you to do. Its important. Just leave your job, your families, your security and everything you know and follow me. Trust me, I know what I’m asking, and I know what I’m doing.”

Matthew’s account says they follow Jesus. Astounding! Really? That seems rather unrealistic. Would you do that? If you did folks would question whether or not you were of sound mind.

The truth is that I almost did something as radical. At age 59 I retired from the Federal Government after 32 years of employment and said to my lovely wife of almost 40 years, “I want to go to theology school. It’s only 4 years. I want to be a UC minister. I can feel it in my veins. I am sure I need to do this.” It was the Jesus scene from the Galilean beach.

Now granted I had been worshipping and volunteering in the church by then for 30 years or so, but this was radical. Lenore had no concept of me retiring and going back to school. She will tell you, and rightfully so, that she was pretty frustrated with me. I’m not sure, but she probably thought “Damn that Jesus anyway.” In truth that was a time of significant conflict for us.

Yes, Jesus caught me in his net. He had been trying for a while, and I had attempted to swim away but I eventually gave in. “OK, you’ve got me, now what? Well its pretty simple Mr. Mclean. Let me tell you a story. You see there was this Samaritan Man who came upon an injured traveller

Yes, the good Samaritan. The classic story of helping those in need, of being at the side of someone in peril, of speaking justice against evil, of accepting “the other,” regardless of race, creed, colour, ethnicity, social standing, sexuality or anything else. And more than anything, to love unconditionally.

I believe I have done OK with the Jesus list. I have tried in any case, and that friends is really all we are asked to do. Try and do our best to live a life of authentic grace, and to do it as our Vision and Call Statements say, ***“We commit to a way of living following Jesus Christ as our model. Our call is to be an inclusive, loving, and compassionate discipleship. Our actions express our longing to make a difference in the world.”***

Which brings me to the next thing I wanted to say this morning. I’m not unique in this company of saints, that’s all of you that sit in the pews this morning or are joining us online. True, I took a specific path and ended up with a specific role, which I need to say I am eternally grateful for. But the reality is that we have all been caught up in Jesus’ net.

Some of you have been captured for a while. Now you are the mature lake trout, the wise elders. Others haven't been netted for quite as long, but are equally dedicated, those might be the rainbow trout. And of course, there are others, newer to the faith experience, the minnows perhaps of the Jesus discipleship. But all of you are equally gifts to this ministry which is Peachland United. And you are all gifts to a community that needs your inspirational kindness, your tender care and compassion. You are all gifts to one another and to a society that needs warmth and tenderness. And you are all gifts to a world that needs truth to be spoken and justice to be lived. All of you are needed.

Yes, you have been caught, you are fishers of people as much as I am. And that is something to celebrate and be proud of.

I am so grateful for having had the time to be a part of this ministry and to have come to know you all well. As I think I have mentioned before, it has truly been an honour and a privilege to serve as your minister these past 10 (almost 10) years. I got the God call and was caught in the Jesus net and you let me swim in the PUC pond. Thank you so, so much. I am forever grateful.

Drawing to a close for today I want to tell you a story about being in ministry together. Jesus new this, I think it is important.

I was a young, very young (21 probably) health inspector trainee. One sunny July day I was driving a back road in Maple Ridge to do some water sampling. I was headed to a lovely, secluded beach. I had the window down because there was no AC in those days. I couldn't believe my fortune. Driving along in bliss, probably singing. And I recall thinking how good is this, summertime, driving down a back road, and I'm getting paid for this too! Where upon a bee flew in the window, inside my shirt and stung me. Son of a that hurt.

I share that story for two reasons. First, it's true and in keeping with my personality, it's funny. But more important it's a parable for our times.

In my experience, and with the grace of the spirit of compassion, the love of the creator and the wisdom of Jesus, I have received more gifts from being in ministry that I can count. And I have been blessed beyond my wildest expectations. Yes, I have been stung a few times but that comes with our living. It comes with the territory, sharing beliefs, speaking about justice issues, and being in relationships. Sometimes one has to upset the apple cart to move forward. To think otherwise would be foolish. Again, it's a Jesus lesson.

I also know that PUC is an incredible ministry of dedicated loving and compassionate folks. You will continue to do ministry well, and I know I will be hearing about it. You are going through some challenges with change right now. That might be a little difficult, but you will get through that well. Why, because you always have, because you are believers, you are disciples, you are lovers, you are fishers of people. You have been bitten by a few stray bees in the past, and you have weathered that storm. You might get bitten again, but you will go on doing incredible ministry, extolling peace and justice, and spreading love and grace in this community and elsewhere. Why, because the spirit of the living God is in you and Jesus is your guide.

Please always remember that you are all a blessing, that you are special and that you are loved. Thanks for listening this morning, Amen