

The 5th Sunday after Epiphany
“At Your Word, We Too Are Astonished” Luke 5:4-9
February 9, 2025
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany is from our Gospel reading, Luke 5:4-9

“4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

5 But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” 6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. 7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;”

So far the text...

“Nevertheless, at Your Word I will let down the net.”

What caused Peter to act in a way that went against better judgement? Having fished all night and caught nothing, why would this moment be any different? The fish clearly weren’t biting. The fishermen had given it their all and the result was a tired body and an empty stomach. No fish fry today!

And now You want me to expend more energy and time in front of this crowd of people? You want me to embarrass myself by doing the illogical instead of just quietly putting the nets away for another day?

But that is exactly what Jesus was telling Peter to do...follow His Word. Trust His Word. Act on His Word! And Peter did. He let down the net. How many fish Peter was expecting to enter his net, we don’t know. But, the number of fish was so great that it left

them astonished! All the fishermen were astonished at what was happening. The nets were so full that they began to break. Another boat was needed to help bring in this catch. And the boats became so filled with fish that they began to sink!

All of this happened because Peter trusted the Word of Jesus and did not pack it in. The same powerful Word of God, that Jesus taught from the boat to the crowd, that all creating, life-giving, Spirit filled, Word of God comes to each of us today. It tells us not to pack it in and follow our own human reason, but trust and follow it daily. And when you do that, that powerful Word of God will leave you also astonished!

Last week, 40 days after Christmas, we were reminded of Simeon's visit to the temple on the day that Mary, Joseph and Jesus went for the purification sacrifice and presentation of the Lord.

What if Simeon had said to himself, I've been coming to this temple many times and I haven't seen the Christ child yet? I'm getting too old for this. I think I'll not go to church today. He would have missed out on seeing Jesus with his own eyes right? But that wasn't what happened. Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit and trusted God's promise that he would not see death until he saw the Lord's Christ. And so he went. And took Jesus up in his arms and said:

**“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;” Luke 2:29**

At your word, your servant can depart in peace. **“For my eyes have seen Your salvation
31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,”**

This is a most astonishing word isn't it? God has prepared His salvation for all people. God loves all people. Though we are a people of unclean lips as we heard in the Old Testament reading from Isaiah 6, Jesus loves us unclean sinners. Like Isaiah, we cry out woe is me! I am unable to present myself in God's presence because of my sin. I am filled with fear at His holiness.

But God does something amazing! He comes to the sinner and touches us with His forgiveness. He astonishes us with His pardon! An angel place a burning coal on the lips of Isaiah to tell him that his iniquity is taken away. His sins are purged. It did not burn his lips but opened his mouth to answer “Here am I send me!”

This burning coal points us to how God touches our lips with the very body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's supper and purges our sins. It astonishes us as we remember our Lord's death and resurrection that He would love us sinners so much to lay down His life.

Yes, Jesus would rather lay down His life rather than depart from them. That's what Peter wanted Jesus to do after he saw this great fishing miracle, wasn't it? Peter came to the sudden realization that in his boat, in his very presence was God Himself in the flesh. And Peter could only think about how unclean he was.

I'm not talking about his appearance after toiling all night in the boat and all the sights and smells of nets and fish bait. No, Peter was very clear about what humbled him.

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" In the presence of the Almighty Lord God, it is clear how sinful I am. It is clear how sinful we are.

And yet, Jesus doesn't leave the boat. He loves to be in the boat of sinners. For this purpose He came to save the lost. And so Jesus says, **"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."**

There is no longer anything to fear in Jesus' presence, at His transfiguration. For Jesus became like us to be our brother and take away what causes us to fear...sin, death and the devil.

Did we not hear how Jesus drove out demons last week and how they had to be silent at His powerful Word? With what authority Jesus speaks, the people were astonished! We saw how Jesus faced down the devil himself in the desert and never fell to him. Instead Jesus wielded His powerful Word to defend Himself.

Matt 4:4

But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Jesus told the people later in John 6, **"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."** So that when Jesus asked the disciples if they too would leave Him along with everyone who didn't trust in His Word, Peter replied:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Yes, Jesus has the words of eternal life. To whom shall we go? How God's Word astonishes us that He has taken away our sin, defeated the devil and gives us eternal life instead of eternal death and condemnation.

What does Jesus powerful Word do? It catches us in His net of love. Jesus comes to us and washes us of our sins in our baptism. He makes us who are of unclean lips, clean and righteous with His righteousness. How astonishing with simple water and His powerful Word, Jesus claims us as His children and brothers and sisters.

But not only that, He then asks each of us an amazing question. "Whom shall I send?" This question must be answered through faith in Jesus. As soon as Jesus took away Peter's fear, He tasked him with the most blessed job of fishing for the souls of men, women and children! From now on you, a humble fisherman, will be a fisher of men. How astonishing!

Jesus sends each of us redeemed sinners to do the same! We are to proclaim what we have seen and heard! The astonishing good news of Jesus' love for all sinners! Where are you going to fish? Everywhere! With your immediate family, with your extended family, with friends and neighbors and in the work place. Sometimes your fishing will be from the shore. Sometimes it will be in the deeper waters. Sometimes it will be in the day and sometimes at night.

Whenever Jesus gives you the opportunity to tell another of His love, our response should always be... "At Your Word, I will let down the net". I trust your powerful Word to change hearts and make unclean lips clean.

Did all of Jesus' disciples trust His Word? As soon as Peter confessed Him as the Christ, Jesus also responded:

"70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve."

Jesus chose the 12 fishermen of souls, but one was not interested in saving souls, only in himself and in 30 pieces of silver. Yes, instead of saying "At Your Word", the response of some is "At my word" at what I want to do. May that never be our response.

Instead let us answer with Simeon, "According to Your Word, I go in peace".

Instead let us answer like Mary upon hearing the Word spoken to her by the angel Gabriel that she would be the mother of God.

“38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” Luke 1:38

And let our response be like Isaiah’s “Here I am send me”. Whatever task you have for me to do in service to Your Kingdom, to catch men with Your Gospel of forgiveness.

Your Word has caught me in the net of your love. I am astonished at all that you have done for me in my body and soul. For all it is my duty to thank and praise You and serve and obey You. Yes, at Your Word, I follow you.

Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)