

Push Out Into Deep Water

Isaiah 6:1-8, Luke 5:1-11

In Luke's story of Jesus calling the first disciples, Jesus said: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." Then they left everything and followed him. But first they had to get out of the shallow water and "push out into deeper water."

When Simon Peter sees the number of fish caught in an area of the lake not known for catching many fish, he and all who were with him "were amazed at the catch they had taken." When was the last time you were amazed by what God has done? What would it take to amaze you about what God can do?

The promise of Jesus given in the extraordinary catch of fish is not in what we can do, and even what our potential future might look like, but in what God can do. The amazing catch of fish is a witness to what God has done and will always do. We have ample evidence of God's abundance. And yet we are more often than not looking to give credit to our own capabilities instead of God's faithfulness.

I believe amazing things have happened at First Meridian Heights in the last two years. The congregation has gotten out of their comfort zone to try new ministry and spent a great deal of money repairing the building. They have dreamed of new possibilities and been given permission to take new risks. There is new energy, and young people are a part of the life of the church again.

Peter and his fisherman friends had been trying all night and caught nothing. Then Jesus invited them to go into the deep water. The deep water is where the fish—or in our case—the people are. Going into the deep water takes faith. Deep water is a risk. The visibility in deep, black water is next to nothing. Going into the deep water is to follow the instructions of Jesus and let down your nets.

But shallow water is pleasant. It tickles our ankles when we wade in it. The minnows and the half-grown fish gather there. You can see all the way to the bottom in shallow water. Staying in shallow water is a big temptation. Shallow water doesn't cost much; it doesn't take a whole lot of courage. But Peter knew the minnows couldn't feed him. The shallow water is where we begin the adventure, not where we finish. Deep water is where we have to go to get what God has for us.

I challenge everyone in the congregation to continue to live their faith and "call" to undertake a ministry where their greatest joy meets God's greatest need. When a new pastor arrives, the tendency is to take a step back and let the pastor do the work. But, the "call" is to continue to live our faith and follow Jesus even when it is hard and we are tired and want someone else to do what God is calling us to do.

How do we best discern God's call? Taking this story as a model, we can draw out at least three primary themes: first, God works with and through questionable characters like us. No sooner has Simon confessed he's a sinner than Jesus asks him to join his team! And so our feelings of unworthiness and fear, while understandable, are precisely what God wants to dispel. God believes in us, and so we should, too! Second, at first the call may seem impractical, if not downright impossible (*We just were out there, working all night, and our nets are empty!*). Boldness and perseverance will no doubt be required; it takes guts to venture out into "deep water." And third, God's call is toward abundance amidst apparent scarcity. Think of those two boatloads of fish on the shore.

To what is God recruiting us today? For what mission can we say, with Isaiah, "Here am I; send me!" ([Isaiah 6:8](#)).

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

Bob