**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**February 6th, 2022**

**Casting the Nets**

1. **A Less Idyllic View**

When I think about the men fishing in the sea of Galilee, it seems like it is an idyllic scene.

The men are simply spending some time with this man named Jesus and they are talking about how they haven’t been able to catch anything all day. It seems rather peaceful, until they all are pulling their weight to get the net full of fish gathered.

Yet I’d like to offer another point of view, maybe a less idyllic scene. I grew up on the Jersey Shore where fishing is not only a hobby, but it is a source of financial security for fishermen. The catch of the day would then also funnel into our restaurants by the shore and to our community. The impact of the seas and the ability to haul enough seafood to the shore is a matter of supply and demand and again, financial security for many of the fishermen families.

Right near the inlet of Point Pleasant, there is a statue of a fishermen, a tribute to the men who have gone to sea but never came back. In our newspaper, there would be times where a boat was reported to capsize and we remembered in those moments how these jobs were not for the faint of heart.

So when I look at these men on the sea of Galilee, I take a different look. Yes, when you fishing on a pond or a lake, fishing can be a relaxing and gentle sport. But for me, when I look at these future disciples, I see men who are familiar with sense of salt on their face and a few rough waves. I sense these men wouldn’t smell so great, not only by the smell of fish but the perspiration of sweat as they sought to catch fish. These men would also be at the will of the sea, hoping for enough food to feed their families or to barter with folks on land to get what they need for their families. These men are no hobby fishermen, they are men who are brave, stronghearted, and not easily thrown by a wave or a tough sea or a long day.

1. When Jesus enters the boat

I wonder what they thought when Jesus wanted to come on the boat with them. Jesus, as far

as we know, wasn’t an active fisherman. Maybe they thought Jesus wanted to learn the craft, or just share some time with friends.

So I imagine it felt a little bold when Jesus said – put the nets back in. Why would they be led to do that, especially when the nets haven’t caught a thing all day? Yet, out of respect, out of courtesy, they put the nets back in the water, expecting nothing, maybe looking at Jesus and shrugging their shoulders when they feel a huge tilt of the boat.

I can sense the alarm in the eyes of these fishermen, both a fear or capsizing but also an adrenaline rush that this big catch is coming in. I can hear the yelling, “All hands on deck!” as they scramble and grab at any point of the net they can and they pull this full net of fish in. Can you imagine what this means for these men? These fish will not only feed their families, allow them to trade, feed others, and more. They look to Jesus, and as the boat is weighed down by these fish and they realize who he is and the power he has, they are both grateful and frightened. Yet Jesus, with that voice that could calm nations, looks at them and the net of fish and says, “And from now on you will be catching people.”

1. Discipleship in our own language

Jesus didn’t have to go out on the boat that day, but he chose to be with the men doing what

they know best and that’s fishing. In the same way, I believe Jesus meets us where we are and, in the gifts, and abilities he has already given us.

What if Jesus came into the teacher’s classroom and by miracle and mystery said, “And from now on, you will be teaching others what it means to follow me.” Or for the artist, coming into the studio and painting a glorious scene and Jesus saying, “And from now on, when you paint, others shall know the glory of God.” Or the musician playing a beautiful tune and it filling the space and Jesus saying, “And from now on, the music shall guide others to eternal life.” Or maybe Jesus comes into the kitchen and the aromas of delicious food fill the air and Jesus says, “And from now on, your food shall be used to fill the mouths and hearts of people in need.” Or maybe Jesus comes onto the job site with the construction workers and sits up in the scaffolding, and says, “And from now on, you shall build shelter for people, for their bodies and souls.”

All of this is to say, that while you do your job or your passion, Jesus meets you where you are and makes it holy. Jesus is willing to get into the work you do, the gifts and abilities he has so freely given you, and shows you how to use those skills to do something more.

I love this Jesus – this Jesus who meets me right where I am and says that I am skilled and talented and good and that all of these things can be used to his glory. And I know that Jesus will push me beyond my comfort zone, he will challenge us all to risk something more, but I also know that Jesus is already working within me to speak the good news with what I am able to do in the here and now.

1. In your own life

This week, your invitation is to see where Jesus is calling you in what you already do. The

first step is to write down your job as well as your talents and hobbies. To those who will say to me, “I don’t have any talents” – well, we need to have a pastoral chat, because I promise you, you do. Sometimes it can be hard to see, when you caught up in this world and this society of strange expectations, but you do have gifts and talents and when you name them, you can then use them to the glory of God.

So write them down and then pray, pray about what God is calling you to do with those gifts you already have. I often half-heartedly joke with those who are especially skilled at baking that Jesus wants them to bring those gifts to fellowship. Yes, I will fully admit that I want to have the delicious cookie, but I also believe it’s true – God has gifted some with the ability to bake amazing things and we are blessed in fellowship to share those gifts.

Some of the time, it’s as simple as that, sometimes you have to dig a little deeper. A favorite quote I have is from the Reverend Frederick Buechner. He says, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

Hear that again, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Where do you find gladness, where do you find joy and what are the skills and abilities God has blessed you with? And then, what are our some of our world and societies greatest needs? Can you find the space in between? Can you find where that joy meets need and where the glory of God is best revealed?

1. Blessing

My friends, I pray that you revel in what makes you joyful, whether that’s fishing or teaching

or cooking or any list of wonderful things that God has gifted you with in this life. Take heart in it, give thanks for it, be joyful for it, and enjoy those great gifts. I pray as well that as you find that joy, you are able to find where you can bless others, where God’s glory may be revealed, and where you are called to be Christ’s disciple in our world today. Amen.