

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Year B

January 22, 2012

Mark 1:14-20

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Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church

Duluth, Minnesota

Jesus: Follow Me, and I will make you fish for people!

Simon Peter: I can't just now. Can't you see I'm fishing?

J: Follow Me, and I will make you fish for people!

SP: I can't just now.

I'm still paying off the loan on my boat.

Besides, what do you mean, "Fish for people"?

J: Come and see!

SP: Come again? That sounds a little vague to me.

J: Come and see!

SP: I'm not interested in some vague, uncertain future.

The world is already far too uncertain for my liking.

I need something certain, something I can count on, like catching fish.

I know all about that.

J: Sounds like you put a lot of faith in fish.

SP: I know all about fish.

Fish are my livelihood.

Fish translate into cash.

J: Sounds like you care a lot about money.

SP: Doesn't everybody?

Money makes the world go around.

J: Do you ever think about anything besides fishing and money?

SP: You bet.

I think about the weather forecast, the direction of the wind.

Like the other day, when the wind came swirling down from the hills to the east, the sea was wild and the waves lapped up over the sides of my small boat.

J: What did you do then?

*SP: My brother, Andrew, and I hustled to bring down the sail
and to tie everything down so that it wouldn't wash overboard.
Then we prayed.*

J: You prayed.
Glad to hear it!
To whom did you pray?

*SP: To God, of course.
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.
You know . . .*

J: Yes, I know.
What do you know about this God,
the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob?

*SP: I know what I've been taught, what my parents and grandparents told me.
They all prayed to God when they were in trouble.*

J: They prayed when they were in trouble.
Any other times?

*SP: That was about it.
They prayed when they were in trouble,
but otherwise, they didn't need God.
It seemed that things went along just fine without God.*

J: So what happened when you prayed during the storm?

*SP: The storm died down, eventually.
It usually does.
But Andrew and I were afraid.*

J: Afraid?
Afraid of what?

*SP: You know!
Afraid of losing the fish.
Afraid losing the boat.
Remember?
It's not paid for yet!*

J: Anything else?

*SP: Afraid of drowning.
Afraid of dying.*

J: Afraid of drowning?
You've been on the sea your whole life,
and you're afraid of drowning?
Afraid of dying?

*SP: Isn't everybody?
Besides, what would happen to my family?*

J: Your family?
You mean your brother.

*SP: Not just my brother.
But my wife.
And her mother, my mother-in-law.
You see, she lives with us.
Not only that,
but we keep hoping there might be a little one coming along one of these days.
My wife has been feeling quite sickly lately.*

J: You have a family!

*SP: Yes, I have a family!
That's why I need to stay with my boat in order to catch fish,
so that I can provide for my family.
It's an uncertain world out there.
I need something certain in my life, something I can depend on,
something I can count on, no matter what.*

J: What happens when you've been fishing all night and catch nothing?
What happens when there's a storm and you can't go out on the sea?

*SP: We go hungry that day.
And we work harder the next day.*

J: You said you pray to God when you're in trouble, but not otherwise.

*SP: Yea! God seems to be more of a fairy tale to me than anything else.
God is in the heavens and I'm down here. That's about it.*

J: What if I could show God to you?

SP: What do you mean?

J: What if I could show you the heart of God?

SP: What do you mean?

*Would you build some kind of ladder into the heavens so that I could climb up?
Something like the song I learned as a kid, "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"?*

J: No. Not that you would climb up into heaven,
but rather that God would be present to you here on earth.

SP: I don't know that I want God to be present to me here on earth.

God seems pretty judgmental to me.

I don't know that I'd want God to be present to me all the time.

Besides, I was taught that you can't look upon God and live.

J: That was Moses and Elijah.

That was before.

SP: Before?

Before what?

J: Before Me.

SP: What do you mean, before you?

Who are you, anyway?

J: Come and see!

SP: You said that already.

And I already told you.

I'm not going anywhere.

J: That's right.

You're worried about your family.

SP: That's right.

I'm worried about my family.

J: What if I told you that your family would be alright?

What if I told you that you can follow me and still be with your family—
still take care of your family?

SP: Say more.

J: What if I told you that following Me is
not so much about leaving your boat and your fish behind

as it is about leaving your fear and your self-reliance behind?
 What if I told you that following Me is about putting all your faith and trust in me?
 What if I told you that following Me is living your life in the light and love of God?

SP: Wait a minute!
Let's go back to the part about you and Moses and Elijah.
You said something about they were "before."

J: That's right.
 They were before.
 I have come to fulfill Moses and Elijah.
 I have come to fulfill the law and the prophets.

SP: Say more.

J: All the law and the prophets point to Me.

SP: What do you mean?

J: Over and over again in the writings of the Hebrew scriptures,
 we read that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding steadfast love.
 Even the prophet Jonah knew that.
 That's why he didn't want to preach repentance to his enemies in Nineveh.
 He knew that if the people of Nineveh repented, God would forgive.
 But Jonah wanted judgment on Nineveh.
 Over and over again we clamor for a God of vengeance, and God of judgment.

SP: You've got that right!
That's my understanding of God.
I'm not so sure I want that sort of God around in my everyday life.

J: That's exactly why I'm here, to show you and everyone who God really is.

SP: Who are you, anyway?

J: I am the One sent by God.
 I have come to reveal the heart of God to the world.
 And I'm coming to you to invite you to see the heart of God.
 And the heart of God is love.

SP: How is all this possible?

J: Follow Me.

SP: How do I do that?

J: Come and see.

SP: I don't know. Sounds fishy to me!

J: I thought you trusted in fish.

SP: I do! Lead the way!