

January 17, 2010 – Jesus is going to mess with your life (but don't worry, it's a good thing!)

This morning, we continuing our sermon series in the Gospel of Luke – one of the 4 narrative accounts in the Bible, that give details about the life, mission and ministry of Jesus. Today, we arrive at Luke 5, where we are going to read about an interesting encounter this man named Simon Peter has with Jesus. Let's read our main passage, I'll pray and then we'll take some time to talk about how Jesus is going to mess with your life and my life, but that we don't have to worry, because it's a good thing... Ready? Luke 5:1-11

1 One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." 5 "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." 9 For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

PRAY

So, again we have this interesting exchange here in Luke 5. Jesus is teaching and ministering to people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. So many people are pressing in, trying to hear Jesus, that he ends up pushing out into a boat, onto the water and uses the natural amphitheater to be able to talk to probably thousands of people at once without having speakers and sound boards and all the like.

The main thrust of what I want to talk about today, comes in the second half of the passage, with the interactions between Jesus and Simon Peter. Besides just being a cool story about a record catch of fish – I think this encounter can speak quite a bit to us about God, and about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

So, here's the first thing that stands out to me. **God (and Jesus – here, as the son of God) sees things in us that we don't see in ourselves.**

Jesus seems to see things in Simon Peter that he doesn't perceive himself. Of course, some of that gets expressed here in this passage, in the miracle of how many fish they catch. But there are also a number of nuances of how Jesus is calling Simon Peter into something more, something different than Simon Peter had been expecting.

We get a bit more background on this point from the Gospel of John, which records another encounter Simon Peter has with Jesus – which likely precedes the one we just read about in Luke 5. Here's what John writes (1:35-49)

***35** The following day John (the Baptist) was again standing with two of his disciples. **36** As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" **37** When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.*

38 Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" **39** "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. **41** Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").

42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

Don't you love that line? Looking intently at Simon... Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, but I call you Cephas, Peter, literally 'The Rock'"

Jesus saw things in Simon Peter that he didn't see in himself. At the time, maybe Jesus was the only one that could see those things in Peter. Because, if you read through much of the rest of the gospel stories, what you'll find is that Peter is anything but a rock. Peter is brash and impulsive; Peter has huge highs... like walking the water for a moment with Jesus, and then he has some amazing lows... like denying 3 times that he knows Jesus, as Jesus is being led to his crucifixion.

Even as Peter was anything but, "the rock" - that is how Jesus saw him. Jesus saw things in Peter that superceded where Peter was at in that time period of his life. Jesus saw what Peter was going to become, even as He was fully aware of what Peter was right at that moment.

As I read these stories of Peter again this week, I got to thinking how much God does that very same thing for us. Just like Jesus did with Peter – God sees things in you and in me that we don't see about ourselves. As our creator and redeemer, God sees what we can become in Him, even as He fully knows who we are and what our lives are like right now.

For myself, I've had this happen to me innumerable times. If you've been around Two Rivers for a length of time – you've heard me talk some about how, at 14, I first sensed God calling me a pastor, and all the stories of things that led up to us starting this church here in Mankato.

If you haven't heard some of those stories... grab me sometime – I'd love to share them with you. But more forward in my mind is an encounter I had just this past week. Monday through Wednesday, Andrea and I were up in the Twin Cities for a gathering of some “younger” Vineyard pastors.

I'm not sure what “younger” means anymore since I am now closer to 40 than I am to 30... but I'll take the label if someone wants to give it to me. It was a great time. Harvey and Violet were up there... along with about 20 other pastors/leaders from around Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Anyway, as part of this gathering, our guest speaker for the week, Rick Olmstead, had each of take some time to be quiet before God and ask the question: “What do I hope to be known for?” In some senses, it was kind of like the scenario maybe someone has posed to you before... that at your funeral, what qualities would you hope would come out about you and your life?

So, as I thought and prayed about that some – here are a few things that came to me... I have a deep desire to “love well”; I want to be faithful to everything that God given me to do and to be; I want to be humble – full of God and not full of myself, and I want to make a difference... I have a passion to have my life make an impact for God and in the lives of others.

Afterwards, we went around the room, sharing a few things that each of us had written down, and then we took time to pray together. And that's when I sensed God interjecting one more quality onto my list – that I would be known for being secure in Him. That cut straight to the heart with me... because if you were around a couple of weeks ago, I shared a bit about my somewhat life-long battle with approval... believing the lie that my worth, my value, my security is based on what I can do. And along with that - the lie that God is a taskmaster, hard to please and ready to condemn me at the slightest slip-up.

So, the face of some of those battles, God speaks this word to me... that along with being faithful, and loving well, and hopefully making a difference with my life, a quality that He saw and was building in me is deep security. Suffice it to say, that meant a great deal to me, and infused hope in my heart.

We'll touch on this more before we end here, but think for yourself, what things might God see in you that you don't see in yourself. Can you have the courage to ask Him, and maybe more importantly, the courage to believe Him about what He says about you? I think God may have some powerful things to communicate along those lines – even today.

So, here's a second point that stands out to me in Jesus' exchange with Peter in Luke 5: **Upon encountering God (and his God-sized plans for us) we are going to be overwhelmed.** With Peter, upon realizing what had happens with this miraculous catch of fish... his first reaction was to say, "Lord, please leave me, I am too much of a sinner to be around you." Peter was overwhelmed by the goodness of Jesus, and couldn't see a way that he and Jesus could connect... he just saw too much of a distance between who he was and who Jesus was.

One of the things that happens when God draws close in our lives, is that we get overwhelmed. Sometimes that happens in more outward ways for people, like numerous stories I've heard from folks that when they first come to church and experience God's presences, all they can do is cry. For others, it's more of an internal thing... where as God draws near, fear grips your heart because you know if you let God in, nothing is going to be the same. You might even be really excited about that possibility, but there is also a way that can freak us out.

I guess I just want to encourage you, that being overwhelmed by God's nearness is a normal response. He's God and we're not, and when God comes near, all our defenses start to come down, and it undoes us. Like Jesus says to Peter, we don't have to be afraid in those times. God is drawing near to us, not to condemn us, but to be good to us, to lift us up into the life that HE has for us.

This also happens when God starts to speak vision and plans to us. One of the stark realities about God-inspired ideas, plans and visions, is that they are going to require God for them to happen.

For Peter, Jesus speaks this amazing reorientation for his life... telling Peter: "Up to this point of your life, you've been a fisherman, but now I tell you... you're going to become a fisher of men – you're going to fish for people, helping them experience the kingdom of God and eternal life."

Jesus started messing with Peter's life, didn't he? Peter was part of a family fishing business, that except for the previous night's results, seemed to be doing alright. But then Jesus started meddling... he started speaking to Peter about who He saw Peter to be, what He saw happening in Peter's life. It was great and awesome stuff, but I'm sure it felt like meddling.

This is maybe one of the most important decisions we can make towards God, towards Jesus... to give him permission to meddle, to mess with our lives, believing that whatever meddling He wants to do, it is for our good, for the best path for our lives, and for the blessing of others, like it was with Peter. The fact is that we are going to have times where we are overwhelmed by God's nearness and the plans that he has for our lives... and we'll have to make the decision to let God meddle, to let Jesus mess with us, because we believe He knows where He's taking us, and it's a good thing.

That brings me to the third piece that comes out in this Luke 5 passage. **Entering into God's plans for our lives will require bold, resolute action.** For Peter and his fellow fishermen, that meant leaving their boats, their nets, and even presumably their amazing catch of fish – leaving all that behind to being following Jesus. At this point, they had no idea where that was going to lead, but Jesus had already made such an impact on them that they knew they needed to respond.

That was true for Peter and the gang, and that is true for us... if we desire to enter into God's plans for our lives, it will require some bold, resolute action in response. I'll finish with a few more things to say on that in bit, but first, let me turn it over to Harvey, and have him share some of his story.