

Sermon for Sunday, February 10, 2019

“Caught Up in Abundance”

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 10, 2019
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved, once again, I invite you to take a deep breath to quiet your mind and open your heart ... We pray in the words of scripture, “Speak Lord, your servants are listening.”

Simon, James and John have fished all night long. Again and again, they’ve cast their nets, and their hopes, upon the waters. They’ve thrown themselves into their work, trying to drown out the question that gnaws at them every night, “Will we catch enough to survive another day?” They are barely subsisting, barely providing for their families. Every single cast of the net carries so much weight. Every time the net comes up empty, their hearts and their hopes sink further and further down

Certainly, our lives differ greatly from theirs. Yet, we too know what it is to work late into the night with nothing to show for it when day breaks. We know what it is to pour ourselves into a project, a person, a plan that does not pan out. We know what it is to cast our hopes out into the world only to come up empty - and how very heavy that emptiness feels.

Simon, James and John finally decide it’s time to give up, time to cut their losses, wash their nets and head home. But then Jesus shows up and commands their boat in order to teach a huge crowd of people. When he’s done speaking, he turns to Simon and says, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

Simon is hesitant, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

What comes up brings Simon to his knees - abundance beyond measure, a lavish, extravagant catch. Now it is not their spirits that are sinking, but their boat - it is overflowing with fish. Now these fishermen’s most pressing question is not, “Will we catch enough to survive another day?”, but “Who will help us take in all this abundance?” The central question of their lives changes from “Will there be enough” to “How can more people experience this?” As author Jan Richardson puts it, “Fish aren’t the only catch of the day; Simon and his companions are hooked. Captivated. Called.”

Simon feels sinful and unworthy in the face of all this, yet Jesus says to him, “Do not be afraid.” In me, Jesus says, you have enough, you are enough. You can receive this abundance. You even can participate in it and draw others into it. Leave behind a life of worry and scarcity, let go of the single-minded focus on your own survival. Simon, James and John listen and follow and they are fed as they become part of something so much larger than themselves.

This is what Jesus does then and still today.

Jesus shows up in the heavy, empty places of scarcity and fear.
He shows up where we have given up, where we have stopped expecting anything.
He meets us in our need and feeds us; he draws us into something so much larger.
We, too, become participants in God's abundance.

Jesus does this again and again and here today. Jesus comes to you in the simple gifts of bread and wine, word and song, and the gathered community. He says to you, there is abundance here that you did not expect. Put out your nets into these deep waters and draw this all into your small boat. Look to others here to help you. You will be filled in body, mind and spirit, and you will be lifted up. You will be drawn into God's lavish, extravagant care.

This abundance will change you. Like Simon, James and John, you will be caught up and drawn into what God is doing in the world. The questions you ask will change. Your purpose will be reframed.

You may feel unworthy, sinful, overwhelmed, like Simon. Yet Jesus says to you, again and again, "Do not be afraid." You have enough, you are enough. You, too, can receive this abundance and draw others into it. Leave behind worry and scarcity. Let go of that tight, heavy focus on your own survival.

You will be fed as you are drawn into something so much larger than yourself.

Beloved, God's abundance is for you and for all people. Draw it in and let it flow through you for the sake of the world.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.

As we pray, I invite you to close your eyes and notice your breath.
Notice that your breath is waiting for you in each moment - pure gift.
As you breathe in, draw in God's abundance for you.
As you breathe out, let go of worry and fear.
We'll breathe and pray together for a few moments.