

Called

A Focused Ministry/Lent 2019 sermon
Jubilee Mennonite Church

Purpose: To place the work of discipleship into the context of God's movement in all people.

Message: It is the deep waters of faith that we are given to avoid that calls to us in faithfulness.

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11 [I will read]; Please read Exodus 3:1-6; 9-12

Synopsis: Sometimes we are challenged to do what we expect the least. For Peter and his crew, they had put in a full night of fruitless fishing, casting about for an elusive catch. He was just ready to go home after this night when Jesus comes and asks him to borrow the boat, and then, later, asks him to cast into the waters where he never naturally goes. The deep water is where you get in trouble; more to the point, it is not where the fish are. Yet this is precisely Jesus calls them to go and exactly where things start going strangely awry.

In the same way, Jesus comes to our ordinariness of life and calls us to take the risk of casting into the deep water. We are challenged to go where we think we cannot, to allow ourselves to hope where we often think no hope is to be had. Calling invites us to live beyond our expectations of how things are and why, and brings us into what we least expect by God working with and through us.

[Into Deep Water luke 5_1-11 2142010.doc](#)

[A cold and broken hallelujah](#)

[The Burning Bush in a World Aflame](#)

[Gone Fishing luke 5_1-11.doc](#)

[Called Out](#)

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Luke 5:1-11

This happened while the crowd was pressing around him
to hear also the campaign of God.

He was standing beside the freshwater lake of Gennesaret
when he saw two boats positioned alongside the lake:

The fishermen, having landed,
were beginning to wash the nets.
But he, stepping into one of the boats,
which belonged to Simon,
asked him to push off from the bank a little.

Then, sitting in the boat,
he taught the crowd.
As he finished speaking,
he said to Simon:

"Push off into the deep water,
and let down your nets into the catch of fish."

But Simon answered and said:
"Master, through the whole night, working hard,
we got nada!
Still, because you say so,
I will let down the nets."

When they had done this,
they hemmed in such a group of so many fish
that their nets started tearing.

They signaled to their companions in the other boat,
in order that they might come to help them.

They came,
and they filled both boats,
enough to just about sink them.

When Simon Peter saw, he fell at Jesus' knees, saying:
"Go away from me,
for I am a sinful man, Lord."

For astonishment seized him
and all those with him
at the catch of fish
to which they had helped {themselves}.

Similarly ... also Jacob and John the sons of Zebedee,
who were partners with Simon

Then Jesus said to Simon:

"Do not be afraid.
From now on you will be capturing people."

They brought their boats up on the bank:
Releasing everything,
they followed him.

Translation: Mary H. Schertz

Who were your childhood heroes? Who leaps to mind with such a thought? Somebody from the sports pages—A Hockey player, baseball slugger? Perhaps it wasn't a person at all but a character from a comic book able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, accomplish feats of strength and have a great back story. I have always wondered why superheroes always have their power and their gender right out there for anyone to see. Batman is a man with bat talents- who knew- seems a bit on the nose for people trying to keep a low profile. Our culture forms heroes with great ease, elevating those who overcome the odds to win out in the end. Even today, we have an exercise of elevating those who meet criteria of being invited into extraordinary circumstances with grace and courage enough for them to be held up for adulation and emulation, at least for their 15 minutes. We all have those persons who we look up to, those whose abilities or character traits allow us something to dream about, to aspire toward, to place trust in emulating for a productive and virtuous life.

I am guessing my childhood heroes were a bit odd, come to think about it. I do not recall having mass media heroes per se, characters from cartoon books, and I was fairly certain it was not in the cards for me to be like Michael Jordan. My heroes, probably have more to do with what brings me before you today than anything else. For me people, I was presented people like Dirk Willems, an early anabaptist who, imprisoned, escaped his captors across the thin ice, only to be recaptured when he returned to save the man chasing him when he fell through the ice, only to be executed all the same. These were the people who were talked about as a model for faith and life more than a person whose fictitious lives were lived out panel by panel, or that I needed to tune in next week to see how they escaped.

One such person was Daniel Gerber. Daniel was a hometown faith hero in the area I grew up in. Moved by the realities of violence in Vietnam, he went there with MCC, spending time among the Vietnamese, distributing aid as it was available and presenting a different American face than the one that was so common during those days. He went and never returned—he disappeared into the jungles of that war torn country never to be seen again, a lost hero following the calling of discipleship. I grew up with his story being told and buildings of service built in his name, a subtle reminder to go and do likewise. His was a story to be admired, to be held up as what can happen when one feels the call (not a great advertisement, I grant you, but

there it is). We were left to wonder, what if it was me? What if I was called in a way such as this and being secretly or not, awfully glad that we may not be.

This is how we approach the story of Luke's. The story of the disciples being called to follow Jesus is one that we place well beyond our reach. This is the stuff of the Jesus, James, John, and Peter—the heroes of the story. It is narrative about the ended up doing what they did, and the rest is history. But there is little here of import to the likes of us who are rather unlikely to encounter Jesus while plying the shores of Lake Winnipeg, or any such like. We never expect that we have a calling to do anything—sure we refer to it by way of speaking within our Sunday school classes, but I am guessing that were I to give you the rest of the time for this sermon to turn to your neighbour and articulate your calling, or the story of your being called, we would have a rather silent room. Calling is the stuff for the heroes—The disciples and Moses. We struggle harder to come to a point both personally and collectively that we are comfortable saying 1) yes we are called, and 2) arriving at a sense of consensus as to what that calling might be and where it might take us.

But I don't tend to believe that this is true. It would be a convenience, would it not, if we were invited into discipleship as a means of getting bonus point for the truly faithful to “level up”. We wouldn't have to worry about Jesus coming along and messing with our well laid plans were that the case. We wouldn't have to consider that calling would ever be relevant to us, to what we do and who we are. But here's the thing: I am not at all convinced that anybody really opts in to the big ask of faithfulness. I don't think Daniel were where he went with a death wish; it just so happened that the things ended up that way. Similarly, I don't think the disciples shoved off with Jesus with anything particular in mind either; it just happened, and calling kept happening as they simply followed and had their whole world's turned upside down. Often we are so involved in looking and listening for the organized master plan from Jesus with complete itinerary, objectives and intentions that we miss the most important part of the whole thing—taking the step of calling in the first place; casting into the deep despite our doubts, despite our uncertainties, for that matter, despite our certainties that the deep in the last place EVER you would want to catch fish that we can fail to live into the calling that we are being offered to discover even here, even now.

There is something uncontrollable about deep waters, where uncertainty, darkness and danger reside. When we go into deep water we are out of our element, subjecting ourselves to forces well outside our control. There are reasons why the deep end is where the old maps marked with “there be dragons here.” Yet it is exactly into this zone of universal discomfort that Jesus is calling the would-be disciples on their post-fishing expedition. They go as much to amuse the peculiar preacher than out of any conviction of about the nature or importance of the action. They were not looking to become fishers of people, nor to add saint to their first name; they just went for the simple reason that they were invited to go and be part of what Jesus was up to, and that made all the difference.

Friends, we are called to come and follow Jesus. We are so called individually and together to be about what Jesus is doing in the world. I wonder what the small risk we are being invited to take in this time might be: to reach beyond ourselves, to hope in the future, even when it can seem less than clear, to open ourselves to the possibility that perhaps what God is doing in our midst here and now is simply inviting us to divert from the usualness of our lives, and to go where we may well suspect that we ought not to be, and to cast our nets and see what comes up. Jesus comes to us and asks us only to trust and take the risk of following where he leads, with the possibility of amazing results.

That is not to say that every time we throw a net, we are guaranteed a catch, or that everything that comes on board will be welcome. That is the thing with net fishing; you pull up everything that is in the net; the good and the bad, the big and the small, the plentiful or the empty. Sometimes, it feels like all we pull up again and again as we cast about in life is the old tires and rubber boots that line the bottom. But all the same, the command remains to take the risk of facing our fears, and pushing out into deep waters. It is in the deep waters where great risk resides, risk that we may or may not be able to fully comprehend for ourselves. Our fears about what might happen and what could be there are real. But that cannot keep us from hearing Jesus coming to us again, asking us to take the risk of deep water, of facing the fears of what could happen, or what could fail in the process, and to take the risk to go beyond our normal waters, and to follow our call not in some grand design where every last detail is spelled out, but

rather in the day to day faithfulness that invites us to risk however much we can to be about the work the kingdom here and now.

A hero, we are told are the brave and the few. I tend to think that they are the ones who knew their fear well enough to see beyond it and to risk something for the greater good. Most of the time, they are just the people who keep doing what they do faithfully despite the odds and following where that doing leads them. As such, we can take our heroes off the shelves and pedestals we have placed them on to keep them well up and out the way for we don't trip on them, and know that what was true in their lives is true in ours: Jesus is at work in the world, a work that we are invited to be a part of.

We are invited to push off. We are welcomed to cast out where we might be surprised. We as such, we are called to have faith that Jesus calls us forward, meeting us in the ordinary and inviting us into the extraordinary things of his way and his will.

God, grant us the courage to know our calling well, and live into them, even when we find them incomplete.

Lent 4

Confession and reconciliation

Leader: *(reading Psalm 32:10-11)*

“Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.”

Who will trust the Lord today?

Confessional response: *(one or more persons stand in the congregation and say)*

I (or we) will trust the Lord today.

God you call us, each one, together
To be part of what you are up to in this moment.
We struggle to know our calling, to live it with the joy it was intended to be,
Because we so often prefer the certainties of contained plans,
Clear futures,
And strategic visions as opposed to your calling.
Come. Cast. Follow;
And never be the same.
Our desire for vision can be stronger than our ability to continue as your faithful
servants.
Yet Lord, you lead us;
And we want to follow you.
You invite us no necessarily to the heroics of the grand gesture
Or the mortal crisis,
But only in time and again inviting us to be part of your kingdom coming,
That is already here.
Call us again;
Stir in our hearts,
Help us to see the people you want us to be,
The world that you are already building,
Where non will be made afraid.
Help us to trust the work is not ours, but yours,
Be with us as we fear the deeps of our world, of our lives.
Remind us that even there, you are Lord, then, now and forever more;
Amen.

(The person or persons then come forward, place their bowls on the worship center table, and offer their confessional response in the form they have chosen.)

Leader: We are all invited to trust the Lord today. Let us bring ourselves to God in prayer.
(Worship leader leads in prayer.)

Can be self written as you see fit

**All: God of steadfast love, we put our trust in your care for us.
When we need to find our way home, we put our trust in you.**

Leader: When we need forgiveness (*pause*), we put our trust in you.

When our souls hunger for a new way of living (*pause*), we put our trust in you.

All: *In the morning and in the evening, we will put our trust in you.*

Leader: Our generous God provides for us. (*Leader moves to the worship center and fills the bowls with bread while speaking these words of assurance.*)

Image TBD

Sending (from 2 Corinthians 5)

In Christ there is a new creation. Everything old is gone, all is new. Go forth, embodying the ministry of reconciliation given to us by Christ.