

## Fishing Or Throwing Rocks?

Isaiah 6:1-8

Luke 5:1-11

I heard a story about two boys who went out fishing. They tell their mom that they're going to catch tonight's supper, so she should be ready with the frying pan when they get home.

They get to the pond and start getting their poles ready, and one sees a snake pop its head above the water. He says to the other, "Hey, did you see that snake!" The other boy looks, and sure enough, another snake pops its head up. And so they start throwing rocks at the snakes. They're having a great time throwing rocks and lose all track of time.

When it starts to get dark, they head back home. Just as she was asked, mom is waiting with the frying pan, ready to cook supper. She asks them, "Where are the fish?" The boys are kind of sheepish, shuffle their feet and tell her they saw some snakes and started throwing rocks and they were so busy throwing rocks they just forgot to fish.

The moral of the story is: you can't throw rocks and fish at the same time.

When I heard this story I was reminded of our meeting on Tuesday night – that would be a meeting of the four churches together. This time three of us clergy types presented a draft of what our co-operation together might look like. It's just a draft, and is intended to be a launching point for conversation and concrete discussion, but it felt as though some people there were only interested in throwing rocks.

How many times do we throw rocks instead of fishing? We hear Jesus telling Peter that from now Peter will be doing a different kind of fishing... and we know or believe we know that we are also called to this kind of ministry, a ministry of fishing ... but how often do we practise it? It's a challenging kind of activity. Many people find it relaxing. Others find it boring. But if we regard fishing as our livelihood, it is neither relaxing nor is it boring. How faithfully do we follow?

Jesus isn't really calling everyone to fishing. Jesus is an individual who tailors his language and his imagery to his hearers. And so, to a fisher, he speaks of fishing ... and he shows the fullness of the life to which he calls us by filling the boat to overflowing, overwhelming those around him so that they stand in awe, and become aware of their own flaws and weaknesses, and instead of blustering, acknowledge their weaknesses and their sinfulness ... and possibly hoping to avoid the demands of the call by arguing their unworthiness.

What do you suppose Jesus says to us? What kind of language does he employ? To a carpenter, perhaps the invitation is to help Jesus build the kingdom. To a line worker, to help him create a vehicle that never rusts or breaks down or runs out of gas. To a seamstress or tailor, perhaps to clothe the world in the glorious garments of the faith. To each one of us the invitation is to see that in our everyday activities and vocations, lies our ministry, and that through the everyday, we are bearing witness to the one who created us, and who calls us to follow. To see how our work may be transformed into something which enriches the lives of others and draws them closer to the glory of God and the loving welcome of the Christ.

Not to throw rocks. Too often, it seems, we get diverted. We turn aside. We declare our own unworthiness, and somehow believe that it liberates us from any obligation, or that it frees us from seeking to fulfil any ministry on behalf of the one whose name we claim. And as we sigh with relief, perhaps we think it entitles us to be a little less than the people the Christ believes we can be.

But, you'll notice that Peter isn't let off the hook, if you'll pardon the pun. It doesn't matter that Peter is suddenly and dramatically aware of his sinfulness, or his weaknesses. Jesus summons Peter into a new relationship with God, and into a life that sees that within his vocation is a

new and larger one — one that communicates to others something about the nature of his relationship with both Jesus and with God.

What do our lives communicate? What statements do we make every day to those around us, without ever opening our mouths? And when we do speak, are we speaking the message of our faith? Or are we saying something else entirely?

On Tuesday evening, we too began with this passage of scripture, exploring it to see how it relates to us and our situation and what it might be saying to us. And in fairness to those who were there, most were challenging themselves to thinking and seeking the model and the ministry to which we might be called. It's a challenge that dares us to think about our entire ministry, and all of our opportunities for the expression of our discipleship not simply those that measured by how many warm, and, during our recent challenges with the boiler, not so warm, bodies are found inside?

We're all very used to the fishing imagery, so let's think about it. If you've ever gone fishing, you'll know that fishers say the shadow of a person on the water will scare away most of the fish — so we have to get ourselves out of the way. We are disciples for the Christ, so we are called and challenged to ensure that every person we meet sees the Christ, not simply another impatient or irritable individual who is over-stressed and under-resourced. We are called to radiate the love and the confidence that is engendered by a living, dynamic relationship with the Christ, and with God.

When I was reflecting upon this passage, I was struck by the fact, that Jesus never once says to Peter or any of the others... "Follow me, and the rest is easy." Fishing isn't really easy. It's demanding. It's hard work. It asks of us the very best that we have to offer.

Whatever the image. Whether we build or sew or construct, whatever model we use, we are assured that the work will be challenging, stimulating, taxing, exhausting, that it will require the very best that we can do, that we will always know that there is something more to be done ...

But we are also reminded, that someone else believes that we are worthy of the work, and finds it rewarding enough to reach out to us, to do the best they can for us, and that the one who loves us and leads us, holds nothing back, and never has. The cross in our sanctuary reminds us.

He calls us to discipleship — to fishing, to building, to sewing, to teaching, to reaching out, to moving out into the world in the confidence that we are called to serve everywhere we go, knowing that for many the only encounter they will have with the Christ comes through their encounter with us. Will they see people whose hands reach out to them? Or will they see people who have become distracted because they're having so very much fun simply throwing rocks? Amen.