

*When Jesus returned to Bethsaida the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place." But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish -- unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." And they did so, and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*

Luke 9:11-17

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

This part of the Gospel from St. Luke was read this week at Morning Prayer on Thursday. As I sat thinking about the reading I began to consider how this event and the Sunday Gospel both teach us the same important lesson.

This Sunday we read from an earlier portion of the Gospel of Luke how Peter, James and John were called by Jesus to follow Him. In both of these events we can come to understand what it means to be called. How we are called and why some who are called do not respond.

Let's first examine the Gospel for this Sunday. Peter and his two partners have been out fishing, no doubt for Walleye, because it says they were fishing all night. Jesus comes to them as they are engaged their daily work. This is an important clue. Jesus comes to them as they are engaged in the work they do every day.

It is not necessarily at some extraordinary event that we meet the Lord and he calls us, but in the ordinary course of our daily lives, He comes to us.

The men have worked all night and are cleaning up to go home, but when Jesus asks them to put their boats in the water again and to go a little way out from the shore they do so. How many times have we "Finished" our work and then there is an interruption. We are irritated and wish only to be done with the day. But Peter, James and John do not respond in that manner, rather they are open to the Lord and fulfill his request.

After Jesus had taught the crowd he tells Peter to go out and again let down their nets. This action would also have taken a conscious decision by Peter, James and John to go against every instinct and skill they had learned. You don't catch fish in the middle of the day and not in the deep water they might have thought, but they did what Jesus asked them to do. And a Miracle occurred. They and all who witnessed the Miracle should have been convinced to put their faith in Jesus. They all should have known the He is the Lord.

Peter is so swept up in the event and so aware of his own sins that before Jesus invites him to follow him, he kneels at Jesus' feet confessing his sinfulness. Jesus response to the open and heartfelt action is to invite Peter, James and John to follow Him and become Fishers of Men, as Matthew teaches.

Here are the actions:

- In the midst of the ordinary Jesus comes to those who are seeking to be found by Him
- Those who are seeking the Lord are instructed to do something a task, or some work that we may consider is not possible
- A Sign or a Miracle occurs
- And finally the faith of those who fully entered into the event is strengthened so that they can respond in an even more profound way

The feeding of the five thousand is the same event. Those who had heard of the healing power of Jesus come seeking Him. Jesus and the Apostles are in a lonely place after they had been sent by Jesus and returned to him after completing the work He gave them to do.

Jesus teaches and heals those who have gathered and when the day is almost over the Apostles come to Him asking that the crowd be sent away so that they can take care of themselves. Jesus responds by challenging the Apostles. Instead of "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" He says, "You give them something to eat."

Again the Apostles are faced with instruction to do something they know to be impossible. How can they get food enough for all these people? And then the Lord instructs them in what they are to do. Have them sit and then He takes what they have to offer, blesses and breaks and shares with all who are gathered. There is not only enough for everyone, but twelve baskets left over. The Miracle has occurred.

And just as before those who have fully entered into the event are transformed by it so they can enter even more deeply into the mystery.

This last piece of information allows us to answer the final question.

We know what it means to be called. Jesus comes to us in the midst of our daily lives and we are aware, because we have been praying and seeking to be found by the Lord. Being called is being found by God and being sent by God into the world to complete the work He gives us to do.

The final question is: why do some who are called and have the same experience fail to respond? Why didn't everyone who witnessed the miraculous catch of fish place all their faith in the Lord? Why did they not all follow Him?

Why did those who had been healed by Jesus, taught by Him and finally fed in that miraculous meal, fail to follow Him? We know that they did not, we know because there is no record in the Bible of 5,000 men following the Lord. The question is why not?

They consumed the meal that Jesus provided for them, but they were not consumed by it. What I mean is that their physical hunger was satisfied and that enough for them. Their inner hungers, the needs they never thought to offer to Jesus these were not fulfilled. Because they were never open to what Jesus could have given them.

They never considered that He could give them more that they would ever need or imagine.

Those who witnessed the miraculous catch of fish might have had many reactions. Lucky guys, they must really know the secret fishing spot. I wonder what bait they were using, or even anyone can do that with a net, I'd like to see them do that with a fishing rod.

In other words most who witnessed the catch of fish were not ready to follow the Lord, because they were more interested in the fish than in the fishing itself. They never considered the catch was not about the fish, but about the Lord who created all the fish in the sea.

And so too it is today: Many will seek the Lord, but few will do so without any reservations or conditions.

Many will witness miracles, but attribute them to something other than the Work of God.

Many will be called to follow, but most will be too busy with their important work to accept the challenge of the most important work anyone of us will ever do.

To be what God created us to be and to follow Him in this life and into the next.

AMEN