

Last week we looked at Jesus' comfort and confidence in his faith and in his heavenly father, and how that showed in a few different ways in his life before his public ministry began – including in the temple in Jerusalem. We touched briefly on the fact that he also taught in his local synagogue. So Jesus starts his ministry inside the walls of the church, we might say. In fact, in the last verse of chapter four, which is the verse just prior to where we began reading in Luke this morning, it is clear that Jesus began his path of ministry inside the church; inside the community of faith...when we read these words, “And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea” (Luke 4:44). So Jesus preached in the synagogues for some time. The very next words in Scripture have Jesus preaching from a boat. So: **Jesus' path of life and ministry doesn't stay within the walls of the church. His path takes him out into the community.** In fact the majority of Jesus' teaching and ministry and interaction with people is not within the walls of the religious building.

And as he takes his ministry out into the community, one of the first things he does is he begins to build his team. He assembles the guys who would be his disciples... the ones whom he would primarily invest in, train, teach, equip, and instill the vision for his ministry and for the Kingdom of God so that through them, the Church would grow. And this morning's passage is the beginning of the assembling of that team.

Now, I think it helps to picture in your mind what's going on here in order to appreciate why Jesus hops into a boat from which to teach. Imagine being at the edge of the lake with this huge crowd of people trying to hear Jesus. He's recently been healing people – Luke 4:40-41 tells us that he healed numerous people of sickness and even demon possession. The result of those healings would be even more people clamoring to hear what he has to say and to bring more people to him to be healed.

So they're by the water's edge, and the people are crowding around him, eagerly listening to his teaching. He needs a little more space, so He opts to

hop in one of the fishing boats with Peter, floats out a bit and preaches and teaches from there. We aren't told anything about what he said. Maybe Jesus had that rare off day in his teaching and it just wasn't a very memorable message. ☺ We all know it wouldn't be the last time an unmemorable sermon was preached, right? It's like the time an elderly woman walked into a little church on Sunday morning. The friendly usher greeted her at the door and asked her politely, "Where would you like to sit?" "The front row please," she answered. "You really don't want to do that," the usher said. "The pastor is really boring." "Do you happen to know who I am?" the woman inquired. "No." he said. "I'm the preacher's mother," she replied indignantly. "Do you know who I am?" he asked. "No." she said. "Good," he answered, and helped her find a seat in the front row.

Now, I'm kidding when I suggest Jesus had an off-day of preaching, but it is interesting that Luke doesn't focus on the teaching at all, though He does tell us that the people gathered around him listening to the word of God. **They had a hunger to hear what Jesus had to say, to be taught the Scriptures.** That's an important element of our faith, to be engaged with God's Word, to learn from it, and let it instruct us in faith and life. We would do well to also be hungry for God's Word and to absorb it as they did.

So after teaching, Jesus turns to Simon Peter. Things become personal at this point and the crowd fades away in the storyline as Luke focuses his, and our, attention on what happens between Jesus and Peter and this ginormous haul of fish. Why did Jesus perform this miracle? It's not one for which Peter asked. Maybe Jesus saw the despair in Peter's eyes over not catching any fish after working all night. Maybe he wanted to do this as a way of saying "Thanks" for letting him use the boat as a pulpit. Actually: **The text implies that Jesus does this to show Peter, and us, what it means to be on Jesus' team: that they'll be fishers of people.** We'll come back to that in a few minutes.

So the haul of fish is so much, that it nearly swamped not one boat, but two. Simon Peter had to call out his partners in the other boat just to help bring the fish in, and still it nearly wasn't enough. This miracle fish catch is enough that he falls down at Jesus' feet, out of a sense of unworthiness to be in his presence. Now, picture this: The boat is filled with smelly, slimy half-alive

fish, to the point of even taking in some water if it tips one way or the other a bit too much, and Peter falls down on his knees in these fish, in front of Jesus, maybe even with his face down toward the hull of the boat, buried in fish. It's almost comical, and definitely gross, when you think about it!

And yet, that was Peter's instantaneous reaction! He didn't care about his surroundings, he didn't care about the fish, he didn't care about falling on his knees into the fish, he didn't care about how he would smell from falling down into the fish; suddenly, all he cared about was the holiness of Jesus and his own contrasting sinful nature which suddenly loomed so large in his own eyes. **"Go away from me Lord, for I'm a sinful man!"** Peter's response is **one of utter humility: I don't belong in your presence.** It's like he was worried about contaminating Jesus somehow, as if his sins would rub off on Jesus and tarnish him, not knowing that three years later Jesus would take those sins to the cross. Never mind that Jesus is at least knee deep in the smelly fish himself: It's his sin and therefore his unworthiness to be in Christ's presence that Peter's worried about. He's a messy guy who's made mistakes in his life and is far from being holy as Jesus is holy. And yet Jesus is there with him in the boat standing there amidst the fish.

And isn't that the way it is with Jesus? **He's not afraid to come into the yucky, smelly, slimy parts of our lives.** He'll stand there waist deep if he has to in order to let us know he's with us, and in order to invite us to follow him. He's not afraid of smelly fish, and he's not afraid of our sins, either. In fact, he's stared down every one of our sins already and taken them on headfirst on the cross and in his death. That's how much he isn't afraid of our sins! He couldn't care any less about the fish squirming around him: He's concerned with this man Simon Peter who's bowed down before him.

**He's so concerned with Peter that he ignores Peter's request for him to leave.** Peter told him to go away because he's a sinful man. But Jesus won't leave. In fact, not only will he not leave, he's actually going to invite Peter to come with him. He wants Peter on his team! Isn't it strange how that works? Jesus wants on his team this guy who stinks with not only the stench of fish, but with the stench of sin, and who wants Jesus to go away. Does that sound like a guy around which to build your Dream Team? I mean if you're

assembling a team of people and someone tells you to go away, are you going to build your team around that guy? Probably not. But Jesus is persistent. And, Jesus doesn't want just Simon Peter – he wants his buddies, too! James and John are invited along as well. They're going to be a part of the team. And the text tells us that they pulled the two boats up on shore, left everything and followed Jesus to go catch people for Christ.

**And today, Jesus still invites people to follow him and be a part of his team.** You and I are invited to be a part of his team. And He's not talking about the second-rate team, the back-ups...the benchwarmers. He wants you and me as his front-line, first-team starters. You and I are a part of God's Dream Team. You may recall the first time NBA players were allowed to play in the Olympics for the United States Men's basketball team. It was 1992, and they called them, "the Dream Team." **Picture Here.**



Here they are. Several of these guys were household names; and Michael Jordan may be the most recognized athlete in the world, ever. This was the greatest team on the face of the earth, beating the opponents by an average of some 40 points per game. It was no contest. They really were the Dream Team.

And for those of us who follow Jesus, we are the members of His Dream Team. Take a look around at the people around you. Go ahead...I'll give you a moment.....**Each of you are a part of God's Dream Team, the Church.** As you think about yourself being on the team, that might make you feel good; as you look at who else is on the team, it might make you feel a little concerned. There are others like you and me on this team all over the world. I know, you may not feel like the Michael Jordan or Larry Bird of the Church...but you don't need to be. God has given you gifts and talents and passions that fit into his team, no matter what. He has a place and a plan for you on the team. Some of that plan includes ministry through the structures

of the church – on staff, elder, deacon, operating the computer in worship, singing, playing an instrument, leading a class or a small group, praying for others, trimming back shrubs, or painting walls...other parts of that plan include ministry that God simply drops in your lap that has nothing to do with the structures of the church: Your neighbor who needs some help while recovering from surgery; the co-worker who's marriage is falling apart and needs someone to talk to; the family that moves into your neighborhood who is looking to meet people and find community; the homeless person at the intersection who could use the granola bar that's sitting on the passenger seat of your car. There are always opportunities to be a great team member on this Dream Team.

**Some people, like Peter, push Jesus away at first when those opportunities are given, or when the invitation is given to be a part of the team.** They're resistant, or at least hesitant. This is true of people who hear of Jesus for the first time and are skeptical about him and the Christian faith...and it's true about long-time Christians who are being asked to step up in a leadership role in church, or have an opportunity to disciple someone, or Jesus has put it on their heart to quit an addiction, or to loosen their grip on their money or pride or possessions or some other idol in their life. For several years in my life, I was like Peter, and my life said to Jesus, "go away, for I am a sinful man." Unlike Peter, who said it in shame and humility, I said it in pride. I thought I was fine and rather liked my sin. It took me a few years to realize that I was heading down a road that wasn't holy or healthy for me or my relationships, and that I really needed Jesus in my life. I'm grateful for Jesus' persistence that we see in this passage, that Jesus isn't scared off by the slimy and smelly parts of our life.

And similarly, Jesus Christ is inviting you to be his disciple and become actively involved on His Dream Team. Maybe you've pushed him away as Peter did, or as I did. Jesus invites you to follow him anyway. He's persistent that way, because he's not looking for perfect people. Maybe you've pushed Him away not so much because you're scared of him – although Jesus and the rest of Scripture does have some teachings that are challenging and intimidating – but because you're scared of the Church, the Dream Team he's assembled. The Church is not perfect, that's for sure, even right here at Rose

Hill. It's eclectic, and we have our differences: some voted for Trump, some for Hillary, probably some for Mickey Mouse, and maybe some for Russell Wilson. Some are financially rich, some are poor. Some are well-educated, some are not; there are Huskies, Cougars, Ducks, and more. We have people who were born right here in Kirkland, as well as in Canada, Australia, Ethiopia, Asia, and elsewhere around the world. Some like football, others like ballet. Some like rock music, others jazz or classical...a few even like country. And it's like this all over the world. **But we're united as a team by the mission of Jesus Christ: to be fishers of people.** The Church – you and I – are Jesus' Dream Team. Just like Peter, to whom Jesus said, "row out further and let the nets down," and then Peter did it in spite of how crazy it seemed to him...Just like him, we listen to Jesus and go where he sends us and do what he tells us to do. Sometimes it goes against our preferences, or seems odd in light of our experience, just as it did to Peter. I mean, his response to Jesus telling him what to do was essentially, "Are you serious? We're the professional fishermen here. We've fished our hearts out here and haven't caught a thing! But, whatever; if you say so..." And look what happened: They couldn't hold all the fish in two boats, even.

**And through that kind of response, through following Jesus' word in our life, we grow in our discipleship to Jesus, and we also become fishers of people.** We help bring others onto the team. So Jesus is shaping us to be actively engaged team members: growing in faith, supporting the team with our spiritual gifts, our talents, our financial resources, and our passions. He invites us to be actively engaged with our whole selves. And through us, He seeks to invite others onto the team as well. "From now on, you'll fish for people." Elsewhere, Jesus says "...go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). He tells Peter that he (Peter) is the rock upon which he will build his church. **2,000 years later, Jesus is still building his Church, still building his Dream Team, and guess what? He's still doing it through team members like you and me.** The Church is still the primary vehicle through which God grows His Dream Team.

So, I want to encourage each of us who are a part of RH, with something that comes right out of Jesus' challenge to catch people for Him. And remember how this all started, with Jesus getting out of the walls of the church, and

taking his ministry out in the community. So with that in mind: **Before Resurrection Sunday (Easter), I encourage each of us, myself included, to bring someone to church here at Rose Hill who is not currently worshiping Jesus in a different church context.** Let's get outside the walls of the church as Jesus did (and as we talked about doing his past fall, so hopefully this is something we're already doing), and in the community. In fact, next Sunday you're going to hear a message from a pastor who's planting a church in Tacoma, so she's living this all first-hand, and her message is going to be all about how we can be out in the community and engaging the world around us. So if you're wondering *how* to become a better fisher of people...how to be a disciple who makes disciples...how to do that authentically...then you'll want to be here next Sunday. Because God might put in your path someone who's never set foot in the door of a church and never heard the gospel message, or it might be someone who used to be an active Christ follower but has now let their faith and their church participation slide, it could be someone who moved to the neighborhood and is looking for a church home. And we want to know how to connect with those people and help them get connected to Jesus.

So you and I are part of God's Team. And our team is one that's fishing for people, for the cause of Jesus Christ. Jesus told Peter to go fishing, and even though Peter was skeptical, he gave it a shot. And he brought in so many he needed another boat. I pray each of us will have that same experience in our lives, and in the life of Rose Hill as we continue to live as Disciples making Disciples, participating in God's Dream Team. Let's Pray...Amen.