

**February 6, 2022 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2075-same-old-same-old>. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/02/04/richfield-school-district-pleaded-for-student-mental-health-help-months-before-shooting>

**Isaiah 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

**Luke 5:1-11**

**Would you pray with me:**

May the words of our lips,  
the meditations of our hearts,  
the exchange in this faithful community,  
be acceptable in your sight, O God, our breath and our life. Amen

**Grace and peace to you, beloved of Christ Jesus.**

**Today our sermon is an “I wonder, I notice” sermon.**

This style of interactive preaching is familiar to some and new to others.

Somehow it feels quite right in the midst of Epiphany

to dig deeply into the scripture...engaging it together.

It feels right to witness God’s revelation in the lives of the fisherfolk along the shore and in the boats,  
and to hear God’s call and claim on our own lives.

**So what is this “I wonder, I notice sermon”?**

Here’s how it works:

I’ve read the Gospel once already, you just heard it, so it’s at least vaguely familiar.

In a moment I’m going to read it again, slowly.

Your job is to interrupt me.

If we were in the sanctuary, I’d ask you to interrupt me verbally.

Truth is, with masks and hybrid and all, that might present its own challenges.

Today, here, in this weird virtual world, you who are on Zoom,

interrupt me using the chat line.

Interrupt by **typing** a phrase that begins either

“I wonder... (whatever you wonder)” or “I notice... (whatever you notice).”

**Eric Ringham, from our congregation, promised he will amplify all that comes through the Zoom chat.**

Eric will do the verbal interrupting on behalf of the writers.

After Eric has interjected what is in the Zoom chat,

I’ll continue reading the gospel until I’m interrupted again!

Today it may sound like this at the beginning,

“Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret...”

Someone types and Eric amplifies: I wonder if he stood by that lake often?  
I notice Jesus gets around the countryside.

**Remember, there are only two rules...**

**1. There are no wrong answers**, let the Spirit lead us as a community.

You may feel like you don't know enough, but really those can be the best interruptions.

Your role is to add your typed interruption in the chat... It only works if people do that.

**2. Use the structure.**

Begin your typed interruption with I wonder... or I notice...

Ready? Give me a wave so I know we're together.

Fingers ready to type? Ready for some revelation?

God bless our wondering and our noticing!

**READ Luke 5:1-11 SLOWLY...**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret,  
and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,  
he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake;  
the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.  
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.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,

"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing.

Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.

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.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,

"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;

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.”  
When they had brought their boats to shore,  
they left everything and followed him.

**Let's continue in this same spirit,**

still using the “I wonder, I notice” structure, still typing in the chat line on Zoom...  
What else do you notice? What else do you wonder? (More added here...)

**Your wondering, your noticing, they make this rich. Thank you.**

Let me offer a few things I found myself wondering and noticing.

**I notice Simon's comment**, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing.”

I wonder about the tone in Simon's voice.  
I notice the honesty, the exhaustion, the done-ness,  
the sense of failure: “we've worked hard, back-breaking-hard, and we've got nothing.”  
And I notice this is a line that many of us can identify with in one way or another.  
I wonder if it's times like these, when we've tried and come up empty, that Jesus works best,  
that Jesus has the most to show us.

**Also, I notice that line, I will make you catchers** of people, or as some translations say, fishers of people.

Friends, these fellows are professional fishermen.  
They know the waters, the weather, the boats, the fish idiosyncrasies.  
They know their fishing partners, they know their bodies, their strong arms, the twinge in their back.  
They know the politics of this industry that in that time was highly regulated by the Roman regime.  
I notice that Jesus calls them to be catchers of people, followers in their own particular way:  
Jesus uses their experience, their intelligence, their gifts, their language.  
Jesus doesn't ask them to leave themselves behind, but rather to be more fully, more deeply themselves.  
*From now on you will be catching people.*

When we talk about callings, I hope, I pray we remember this truth:  
that Jesus uses who we are to go further, to go deeper.

**I notice the abundance in this story: the nets full and bursting.**

I notice abundance is the image we have here for God's reign.  
I wonder if we remember this abundance, this extravagance enough.

**Finally, I notice tension, the gap in that line,**

“Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing...

...YET if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

I notice exhaustion...and hope.

Resistance...and trust.

Defeat...and obedience.

I notice that it's good for me, for us, to hear this obedience, this trust: “But if you say so...”

**It's been a hard week my friends:**

We each know our own experiences.

And I'm thinking also about the shooting outside the school in Richfield,

the teens, one dead, one critically injured, two other charged.

I'm thinking about mental health and the pandemic and the weight of “right now.”

And I'm thinking about the death of Amir Locke and a family and community grieving, again.

I'm thinking about No Knock Warrants and split second decisions and another black man dead, lost.

As one of you wrote to me in a text yesterday, “So tragic once again.”

It is so tragic and there is just “so much”, too much.

**At a time like this, we could say:** “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing...”

We're tired and the system keeps grinding,

and lives are being lost, and we can't seem to get it right.

....AND, YET beloved ones, we are called to let down the nets,

to grieve—an abundance of grief,

to be outraged—an abundance of outrage,

to show up—an abundance of us showing up,

to keep being part of the change—for there is an abundance of change needed,

and we, beloved ones, are called to be part of it.

**Thank you for showing** up this morning, for wondering and noticing.

Thank you for together bringing an abundance of good news.

**Let's end with pray:** We give you thanks, O God, for those fisherfolk on the lake who trusted enough to throw out their nets...again. Call us again, God. When we're tired, when we're uncertain, when the night has been long, when it seems like change isn't coming fast enough, call us again, God. Make us strong in resolve to trust you, to go deep, to follow your call. Amen.