

Tracy Daub
2/17/19--University Presbyterian Church
Luke 5:1-11

DEEP WATERS

Does it ever seem to you that God showed up more often in the days of the Bible than God does now? All throughout the Bible, God interacts with people in amazing ways: speaking to them in fiery bushes, performing miracles, sending angels to people. I was once sitting in on a children's Sunday School class early in my ministry and the teacher was reading to the children the story where the angel appears to Mary and announces that she would give birth to Jesus. One little boy spoke up. "Wow," he said. "That would be amazing, wouldn't it? If an angel just suddenly appeared!" I thought he brought up a really good point. The teacher obviously didn't know how to respond to his remark because she said, "Now Robert, let's stick with the lesson."

But it would be amazing if an angel just showed up. It doesn't seem fair that such exciting religious moments happened to people long ago and not to us today. Here we are, carrying on day after day, doing the mundane duties of life, managing the hardships that come with daily living: our jobs, our school work, going to the store, paying the bills, caring for relatives who are sick, finding some time to assist at church or other organizations. Family members from far away call to find out how we are, and we have nothing really interesting to report. Our lives are filled with our daily tasks, managing our health, carrying on with life as best we can.

Peter and James and John were in the midst of an ordinary day. They earned their living as fishermen and had been fishing all night long. Over and over again they had thrown out their nets into the waters and then hauled in those heavy nets, hand over hand, straining to pull them up. But they caught nothing that night. Sometimes that happened with fishing. When our story

catches up to them, they are on the shore near their boat, cleaning their nets. This was the ordinary, regular work of a fisherman. It couldn't have been more mundane. Until Jesus tells them to go back out again into the deep waters and throw out their nets. And when they do, they make a catch of fish so enormous they need another boat to help them haul up the net, and even then, the size of the catch threatens to sink both boats. Right there in the midst of the most ordinary day, Peter and James and John have this extraordinary moment of God's amazing activity.

This story is a call story--where Jesus calls Peter and James and John to become his disciples. He tells them after this giant catch of fish, "From now on you will be catching people." And they left everything right then and there and followed him.

But this story is also a story about abundance--about God's super abundance. It was an astonishing event, so extraordinary that Peter realizes that he is in the presence of something divine. He falls on his knees before Jesus saying, "Go away, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Peter is humbled before the awesome presence of God in this man Jesus. What this story then becomes is a contrast between scarcity and abundance. Peter at that moment felt the contrast between the scarcity he felt of his worthiness and the abundance of God's goodness he has just witnessed. But Jesus knows what God can do with Peter. Jesus knows the abundance of good things God can do with Peter and the abundance of capacity that lies within Peter to be part of God's activity in the world. Come with me, Jesus says, and you will catch people. God's bounty is overflowing all over the place in this story.

Jesus offers Peter an important gift. Jesus offers Peter a deeper vision of reality--a reality that is not based on scarcity but on the abundance of what God can do with our lives. That vision is an alternative reality to the one we most often inhabit. Too often, we tend to live in the

reality that highlights scarcity. We feel the sense of scarcity in a material way--especially regarding money. Certainly there are people who truly do not have enough money. There are people living in poverty all over the globe and right here in our communities who lack what is needed for living: decent housing, jobs that pay a living wage, financial hardships that have them choosing between food or medication, lack of medical care or education. Material scarcity truly afflicts far too many people in our world. Yet even those of us who have life's necessities often feel we don't have enough. We live in a culture that fosters desires for more: more money, more security, more possessions, more opportunities. And sometimes we can feel a keen sense of scarcity.

Scarcity is also an emotional matter. Some of us know something of what those fishermen felt like to labor so hard only to come up empty. Maybe we had hopes for what our life would be like but have felt like instead we hauled up empty nets. Maybe our marriage failed or we are estranged from our children. Maybe we are run down by life and its hardships and feel utterly depleted of life or hope. And our nets are empty.

Scarcity is also a theological issue. Sometimes we can reach a point where we expect so very little from God. And our spirits are dried up and have little room for hope or life or joy.

Sometimes it can seem like so many others are enjoying the deep waters of abundance but not us. We see friends or colleagues enjoying successes. Members of our extended families reap financial rewards. Our neighbor's children are great successes. But what about us? Where are those deep waters containing abundance for us?

Thus, scarcity becomes a reality that can dominate our thinking and our lives. But Jesus offers us a radically different reality. This is not fantasy that Jesus offers. This is a vision of a different *reality* we can live in and know--a reality based not on scarcity but on the

understanding of God's abundance. It embraces the abundant goodness of God and what God can do with us. Right here, in our ordinary lives, God's abundant activity can be seen, experienced, and known. It's not just relegated to people in the Bible. It's not just offered to a select few of very special people. Jesus shows up to the most ordinary of people: poor working-class fishermen, and sees the abundant possibilities of what God can do with them and their lives. We don't have to look elsewhere to find God's abundance. We don't have to travel to other places of the globe to become part of God's activity. The waters are plenty deep right where you and I are living, right in the midst of our own ordinary lives. We can be part of God's abundant love, abundant grace, abundant compassion, abundant generosity, abundant forgiveness.

The world is indeed filled with people who know far too much scarcity: people who literally need food, people who lack shelter or education or medicine. It is also filled with people who lack hope or love or help. And Jesus invites us all to join in the catch--to find and help and care for others. New Testament scholar Tom Wright states, "Ultimately, there are no bystanders in the kingdom of God." No bystanders. We each have a role to play in God's realm of love and care and justice. And it begins not somewhere else but every day in our ordinary but extraordinary lives. They are made extraordinary because each day we have been blessed with the opportunity to be part of God's great abundance: to share love and forgiveness and kindness and justice in the course of our daily lives. The waters are deep right here.