

Sermon 1 26 20

“Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Not just, “they left their nets,” but IMMEDIATELY they left their nets. They dropped everything. Just like that. What does that say about Jesus? What was there about him?

Both John and Jesus had been baptizing people. But then John was arrested. I suppose John always knew he ran that risk. He was very critical of Herod. Jesus was not quite as critical. When John was arrested, Jesus saw the writing on the wall. He got outta Dodge. Discretion being the better part of valor, Jesus went back home to the country - home to Nazareth in Galilee. He wisely took a break. I don't think he was afraid of repercussions. He just wasn't ready for them yet. His ministry had barely begun!

When Jesus went home to Nazareth, he didn't stay there. He soon walked about 40 miles northeast to Capernaum, the lakeside town where Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, and James and John, his other fishermen recruits lived and worked. Capernaum became the center of his ministry in Galilee. It's right on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, a freshwater lake which is approximately 13 miles long and 8 miles wide.

As I said last week, Jesus, at the age of maybe 30, was probably older than his disciples. He was only 33 when he died. They were young men.

About two weeks ago, I was asked by Father Todd Foster of St. Thomas Glassboro to come over this last Wednesday to lead a ministry they call Dinner Church. It's for Rowan students. We gathered in a circle to pray and then we took candles over to a large square dinner table. A church member had cooked a lovely Italian dinner for us. We sat at the table and for my part of the program, I talked about Jesus recruiting the disciples. As I sat there I realized that the disciples weren't any older than these college students.

The disciples were a group of young people. They were both men and women, but mainly men. A couple of them were Jesus' real brothers. The ones who are named in the Bible were the most notable. They were young men, some married, who were looking for something, for someone to lead them out of the dead end that was Israel. They were looking for hope, for a future, for the Messiah. Is that so different from what young people are looking for nowadays? Think of what Jesus represented to them - Hope! A new way of life! Real friendship! Forgiveness! Joy! Something to focus on rather than the tyranny of Rome!

Jesus represented revolution to some, maybe a welcome escape to an ideal that couldn't last to others, but he clearly represented a change - a welcome change - an essential change - anything other than life as they knew it. So they committed. They bought in.

Jesus met people where they were. He knew how to talk to fishermen and tradesmen, to a tax collector like Matthew (tax collectors were considered traitors, but Jesus didn't care), to shepherds and farmers. He was one of them!

Capernaum was a beautiful small city, complete with a synagogue that had been built by a Roman centurion based there. Jesus did a number of miracles in the town. Capernaum became his base of operations. Capernaum is now a beautiful ruin - right next to the Sea of Galilee.

There is a fairly modern church there now, St. Peter's, a Catholic church for pilgrims. It's hexagonal and has glass window panes in its floor that look down on the foundation stones of a house from the time of Jesus. Supposedly the house belonged to Simon Peter.

We can't really know the accuracy of any of these claims, but we can know that a revolutionary young man came through here and left quite an impression - an impression that spread by word of mouth, word of mouth from largely illiterate disciples who spread the Word throughout the world.

They did well - very well when you consider the odds against them, including an entire well-organized Roman Army eventually.

This Christianity business shouldn't have done well at all! It should have been a complete disaster that fizzled out. Think of the

persecution! Christians were a group of people who refused to worship the Emperor! That set them up for disaster right there! And as is the case with many new enterprises, there was a lot of infighting.

Just look at Paul's first letter to the Corinthians! It's filled with his exasperated love! Here he established this church and now they were all fighting with each other! They were fighting over who had baptized who and who that made them a follower of when they were all supposed to be followers of Jesus Christ! Period!

I love what Paul says —

“Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you - (except Crispus and Gaius), so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)”

God bless the scribe who wrote that down! It tells us so much!

But this Christianity business somehow DID WELL! It just kept growing - in spite of human mistakes and human pride. It just kept bouncing back and then moving forward.

Paul said that “the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the

power of God.” That’s because it’s not *just* about the cross. Don’t stop there! It’s about the resurrection!

That’s what I want us all to remember as we enter our Annual Meeting today. And as we soon begin Lent. We are people of the Resurrection.

Resurrection is never-ending. Resurrection just keeps on going. Resurrection is eternal. It’s happening now! All the time! Forever!