

Love Like An Ocean

Meditation for September 11, 2022

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Readings:

Psalm 104:24-26

24 O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, great and wide;
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.

26 There go the ships
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

Luke 5:1-11

5 Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret (also called the Sea of Galilee) and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 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. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. 7 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. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 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." 11
When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Prayer

O Lord, how magnificent, how manifold, how amazing is your creation.
Your works are poured out among us and cannot be missed.
In wisdom you have made them all and made us all too.
Bring into this moment your wisdom,
That we may live wisely,
And love like an ocean.
Amen.

Sermon

What was so different, on Simon Peter's second fishing expedition, that after an entire night without a single fish - all the nets were full and the boats practically sinking under the weight of the catch? What was the difference?

Was the difference in the wind?

The dawn light calling the fish up to the surface?

Had the currents changed?

Was the difference that they put the net on the other side, the way another version tells it?

Was it that they'd gone into the deep water? There *are* more fish in deep water.

Yes, surely Simon Peter's willingness to move into deep water - that classic symbol of mystery and uncertainty - made possible a surprising catch. *It happened in deep water.*

Was it Simon Peter's humility? Drawing on the trust that he had in his new teacher - Simon Peter was humble enough to think there might be something he didn't know, willing to try again, try something new, had hope in a new outcome?

Yes, surely, it was that willingness to do things a new way. *Can you imagine? Simon Peter could.*

Was it that Jesus was not bound to the same human systems these fishermen were - so much of their catch was taxed or exported that even when they had a good night their families were still hungry. One writer puts it this way: This is a story of "extravagant, excessive, bountiful generosity. Food for all, food security for all, justice for all, nurture for all. In this eucharistic image of plenitude, [Yes], Jesus shows Simon what God's kingdom will look like when it's fully established."¹

Was it that Jesus helped tired and discouraged fishermen reconnect to the abundance and beauty of God's good creation? Yes,

5 There is the sea, great and wide;
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.

26 There go the ships
and Leviathan that God formed to sport in it.

Or was the difference that Jesus was in the boat with them?

Yes, surely, most certainly, it was that Jesus was in the boat with them. *It happened when they knew they weren't alone.*

This is the crucial difference, I think. Jesus was in the boat with them. Jesus invited them to set out into deep water, and went with them. Simon Peter and James and John were not on their own.

¹ Debie Thomas, "Same Old, Same Old" - <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2075-same-old-same-old>

Thanks be to God, we are never alone.

That is the good news for us. We are called into deep waters - called to love and serve and hope - called to believe the next catch might be better. We are called to put out into deep waters and try again and again - and we can do it because we are not alone in the boat.

We live in a world in need. You could reasonably feel like Simon Peter, James, and John at the end of a night of frustration, your nets empty and your heart filled with worry for yourself, your family, your community. We know folks who are tired. We know folks who are grieving. We know folks who are sick or in crisis. And the world as a whole - from violence to illness, life is hard for us, for our neighbors next door and across the ocean. As we ponder a season of creation, there are days when we feel the weight of climate change, the clock ticking.

Yet. One thing I know - when Jesus is in the boat with us, there is always a new day. A new dawn. Nets that can be filled. Love like an ocean, love moving through us and into the world in waves.

In this month focused on creation - not Pilgrim's first such season and certainly not our last - we acknowledge our call to be healers of the earth, for the sake of our neighbors near and far. We humbly admit to where we have failed to protect the earth and God's creatures. But in this particular season I'm moved by Bill McKibben's words printed on our bulletin - The challenge before us is to figure out how to link these two callings, these two imperatives from the voice in the whirlwind - the call to humility and the call to joy. Each one, on its own, is insufficient.
--Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind*, p. 63

We are called not just to confess, to repent, to change, to serve -
But also called to joy, to revel in beauty, to connect with the sacred earth.
For it is with joy and humility together that we can be healers of the earth.

And in all of it, with God's love, and within our community of faith, we are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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Benediction

Go forth to love like an ocean,
Buoyed by God's strength
Awed by creation
And moved to serve.
Amen.