

## Trinity 5 (2025)

There was quite a stir at the church that sent me off to theological college. It happened after I was gone.

It had nothing to do with the conservative / liberal divide we hear so much about today.

It had everything to do with CHANGE.

A new rector had come and decided to change the color of the sanctuary (the area around the altar) from a cream to a vibrant burgundy red.

A vestryman I knew vowed to put it back the way it had been for the past 70 years as soon as that rector left.

Change is uncomfortable and often brings about strong feelings, as it did in this case.

I remember my mother quoting an old woman, actually the mother of an Episcopal clergyman, whose take on change was: **“I hate progress.”**

I get her point! Not all change is good nor is it progress . . . especially when it comes to innovations in Church doctrine.

Paul puts us on the right track when he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”**

But not all change is bad, as I think you will agree.

Take, for example, a baby brought home from the hospital. You expect change. You want growth and development. Indeed, if it did not occur, there would be real cause for concern.

Change of a positive sort is what we find happening in the lives of Simon Peter and his

fishing companions in today's New Testament passage.

Jesus shows up and their world is turned upside down. Change becomes the gateway to life.

Before Jesus came along, they were making it okay, perhaps not getting rich but keeping food on the table and earning enough to pay their cable television bill.

They had their boats and nets and familiar routine. You might say they were in a comfortable rut.

William Alexander Percy's hymn (Hymn 437 in the Hymnal) describes their situation:

**They cast their nets in Galilee  
Just off the hills of brown;  
Such happy, simple fisher folk.  
Before the Lord came down.**

But then came a call from Jesus and their lives would never be the same.

Something similar happened with David the shepherd boy in the Old Testament.

He was off tending his sheep, content and happy, before the prophet Samuel showed up at the family farm on a mission. That mission was to find a successor for failed King Saul. David was God's pick for the job.

The story concludes with Samuel anointing David and the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him. From that moment on, his life would never be the same.

The same is true today when Jesus shows up. When he shows up with His call to “come follow me.”

With this call comes new adventures and a new destiny.

But a note of caution is due here. Following Jesus does not mean all will be smooth sailing in life.

Actually, the contrary is true as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died at the hands of the Nazis, made clear when he wrote: **“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”**

This was Peter’s and most of the other disciples’ experience.

**“Young John, who trimmed the flapping sail, / Homeless in Patmos died. / Peter, who hauled the teeming net, / Head down was crucified,”** William Alexander Percy’s hymn goes on to say.

Where I am going with all this?

It is here: With Christ comes change . . . change which brings joy and meaning to life –

yes – but also which makes demands and stretches a man.

I want to look at the changes that took place in Peter's life in this morning's passage, but first I want to pause and look at some words we find at the beginning of today's reading: **“The people pressed upon him [Jesus] to hear the word of God.”**

What is remarkable statement that is, especially in light of what we see today!

Today, it's hard to get people to drive a few blocks to church on Sunday morning, but these folk came from all over with great eagerness, hungry to hear the word of God.

I want to suggest that people are still hungry for answers to life's ultimate questions. I am thinking of such questions as:

**Where did I come from? Why am I here?  
What is wrong with the world? How can  
what is wrong be put right? Is this life the  
end?**

If so, why are people not thronging the  
doors of Christian churches to find those  
answers? ///

Might it not be because the word of God has  
been muffled in our churches today?

Instead of a bold proclamation what is being  
offered is a bowl of pablum?

The wagon of the Gospel has been so  
hitched to the wagon of popular culture that it  
has been robbed of its power?

The message here is: **Don't chisel down the  
message. Make the Gospel the main thing.  
Deliver the whole counsel of God's Word. ///**

But, back to Peter. I want to look now at two change that happened in his life.

Frist, there was **a change of understanding about Jesus**. Peter begins in today's Gospel by calling Him "Master," a polite address to one with some kind of authority. He's on the right track, but not quite there yet.

It was only after the great intake of fish that he addresses Jesus as LORD, *kurios* in Greek, a word the Jews regularly employed for God.

What is your view of Jesus? Does it need to be expanded? Was Jesus *just* a wandering rabbi who on occasions could do some tricks, or was He much more? Who do you say He is?

If He is LORD, the One who puts a human face on the invisible God as no one else in all history, we need to pay attention to Him.



We need to do what Peter did: lay aside our old nets and follow Him. Are you willing to do that? Am I?

So, first Peter had a change of understanding concerning Jesus. But, secondly, he had **a change of understanding concerning himself.**

After the miracle of the fish, He sensed His own imperfections and cried out to Jesus saying, **“Depart from me for I am a sinful man.”**

The same is true with us. When we put ourselves up against other people, we may come out looking pretty good, but when we put ourselves up against Jesus, we see ourselves as we really are.

Jesus’ response to Peter’s cry “depart from me” is interesting and instructive. It was not: **“You’re right, Peter. You are a worthless sinner. Get away from me.”**

No, it was “come follow me . . . I am going to make you a fisher of a different sort, a fisher of men.”

Is there not an application here for us?

Once we see our need, then and only then is God able to accomplish great things in our lives.

The commission Jesus gave Peter on this occasion He gives to all the baptized. You and I are called to be fishers of men and women.

1 Peter 3:15 tells us how:

**“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”**

This is how a fisher of people goes about his work. It involves at least three things.

First, **be ready**. Know what you believe and why. You can't share what you don't know.

Secondly, **exercise sensitivity**. Go about your work with humility and awe. Strive to be a winsome witness. Let your approach be that of one beggar offering what he has to another beggar.

Thirdly, **learn to listen . . .** let the person with whom you are speaking get his question out before you try to answer. ///

In closing . . .

Today's passage is full of practical wisdom.

Jesus's call to come follow Him still goes forth.

If you hear it today, respond without delay. Say yes to that call. "Come every soul by sin oppressed there's mercy with the Lord."

If you have heard and responded to God's call, let the Master fisherman teach you how to fish . . . fish for men and women. Let Him unmute your tongue so you can be a blessing to others. ////

With Jesus comes change, change that that is both consoling and challenging, life-giving and life-demanding.

Don't resist it.

Get on the Gospel Ship and get busy fishing!