

5 S. in Epiphany 2/9/25
Luke 5:1-11 C

“PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP AND LET DOWN YOUR NETS FOR A CATCH.”

Flotsam and jetsam. Those are two of my favorite words in the English language and I’m going to guess that flotsam and jetsam are words that you do not hear very often. Flotsam and jetsam are wreckage, debris, floating on the ocean. Living in North Dakota, you probably don’t really care too much about flotsam and jetsam, but if you would find yourself as the captain of a ship on the ocean, they would be very much on your radar screen. Remember, we’re not talking a little piece of drift wood that hits your Lund on Beulah Bay. There’s been a lot of shipwrecks, spilled cargo over the centuries – big things that can cause a lot of damage to an ocean ship. And, there is still unexploded mines floating around on the ocean waters.

You don’t have to be on the ocean to know all about flotsam and jetsam. As you sail to the harbor of heaven, there is temptation, trials, troubles all around you. And, it’s not meant to be unkind, but brutally honest that sometimes this world leaves us feeling like flotsam and jetsam – junk, plain junk. In fact, *the valley of the shadow of death* is how the Psalmist describes this present age (23:4).

Our Gospel lesson for today TEACHES US THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE OF RESCUE FOR US SINFUL MORTALS – THE ARK, THE ARK OF CHRIST’S CHURCH. Just as the ark preserved Noah, so the ark of the Church of Jesus Christ saves us from the wickedness of this present age and the flood of sin, death, and hell.

In this season of Epiphany, we rejoice that Christ has appeared to us

and that He has made His Boat a place of rescue and safety for us. In our lesson, Jesus got into Simon's boat and *asked him to put a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people from the boat (v. 3).*

Because Christ is present in the boat, it becomes a **symbol** of the church. The boat becomes the place where Christ proclaims the kingdom and where He is present with us through His Word. The Rev. Dr. Luther captures the significance of all the imagery: the sea is the world, the fish are people, the net is the preaching of the Gospel, and the boat is the church.

Throughout the Old Testament, the "depths of the sea" symbolize chaos, upheaval, troubles, death. The "sea" is this world of sin. The "fish" are those souls created in the image of God, swimming the tide of daily struggles, feebly struggling with sin, death, and Satan; and those for whom Christ died. The "net" is the Gospel, the Good News of salvation in Christ.

Through the water and the Word of Baptism, Christ has "caught us alive" in the net of His Gospel and brought us into His boat. Now, we trust, rejoice, and find Gospel in Jesus Christ alone.

The early Church had this very much in mind when it named this part of the Church building in which we worship the "nave." "Nave" is Latin for "ark". As one sails on a journey to a destination, we are sailing on a journey in the boat of the Church through this valley of the shadow of death to the safe harbor of heaven for eternity.

I. As we sail, flotsam and jetsam are all around us. The wind and waves may unsettle us; the storms and tempest may beat upon us. And, yes, temptation to doubt the promises of God's Word and temptation to sin will come. The devil, the world, and our own sinful nature will never stop trying to mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great sins.

The Rev. Dr. Luther readily understood what it means to be a saint in the Church Militant. Luther said this,

“If Christ is to help, there must be trials, trouble and toil, and it must come to this, that we despair of all human counsel, comfort, and ability. Then He comes with His help, and shows that He still has the means of comfort, counsel, protection, and deliverance, and that He is able to bestow all this when everything else has failed us, and when all that we have done or suffered, and still may be able to do, is nothing and in vain; yea, that in such need and weakness He gives and helps in richer measure than could be done by all human power, skill, and aid.”

Simon -- we better know him as Peter -- knew the truth of Luther’s words. Simon and his partners were fishermen by vocation. All night, they had toiled, with nothing to show for their labors.

But, then Christ came with His Word of promise and, as Luther says, Peter despaired of all human power, skill, and knowledge. In faith, he turned to Christ, trusting in His Word of Promise.

In the footsteps of Peter, we despair of ourselves and everything of this world. We know there is no safety, no security, no peace in our good works, our good intentions, how much money we have in the bank, or how many toys we have. Like Peter, we turn in faith to Christ alone, because Christ Jesus has saved us from the wickedness of this present age.

II. Remember that in the Old Testament, the “depths of the sea” symbolize chaos, upheaval, troubles, death. To save us from all that, Jesus was born of virgin mother and wore a human body just like ours, so that He could take onto Himself all the chaos, upheaval, troubles of today; all our sin and all its wages of death. He carried it all to the cross, where He laid to atone for all of it. And you can be certain that He did atone for it, and was victorious over it because He rose to life again the 3rd day.

III. The Gospel net was cast out and caught you, Dear Child of God, at the font of your baptism to bring you into the ark of His Church. As God kept faithful Noah and his family safe from the flood waters in the ark, so He has shut us up in His own Body, the ark of His Church, so that we may be safe from the wickedness of this present age and the flood waters which threaten us. As God led Noah to safe ground, so He will lead us to the safe ground of heaven for eternity.

As we sail, safe in the ark of Christ, to heaven, let us not forget those souls who still swim the in chaos and upheaval of the deep. Our Lord calls upon us to cast out the net of the Gospel to the depths of the sea. As a fisher of men, you are to tell the Good News about Jesus.

When we hear “we are to be fishers of men,” and talk of evangelism, it is almost as though it’s a guilt trip for us. No, evangelism is not a guilt trip. Recall the words of Jesus, “*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men*” (v. 10). Did you catch that promise? Not “might” catch, not “maybe” catch; will catch. Baptized and living in Christ, we are merciful, as He is merciful to us.

We remember the words of Paul,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor 1).

We had Winkel this past week. At every Winkel, we take turns: one pastor doing Bible study and another a study on our Lutheran Confessions. The pastor doing Bible study asked all of us a most thought-provoking question: Who had a mentor pastor before you became a pastor? In other words, who had a pastor say to you, “You should become a pastor?” What to guess what the response was? I think virtually to a man, each and

everyone of us had a mentor (if I can use that word) that did exactly that.

And, it's not just true of pastors. Consider this: How did you get here today, to God's House? The answer is not, "I drove my car." Maybe I should be clearer – Why, why are you here? Once you were lost fish in the chaos of the deep sea, but someone -- a parent, spouse, friend, Sunday School teacher -- in my case it was my parents who brought me to the baptismal font -- someone took the time to tell you the Good News about Jesus. God comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble or trial or fear with the comfort we ourselves have received from our loving Father in heaven.

The miracle in our lesson is that the nets that could find no fish now find an overabundance of fish because of the word of Jesus. His command to us always contains the promise, *So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Is 55:11).*

God's Word will never return empty!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.