

Peter, recognizing something extraordinary about this Jesus, says, *“Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”* (v. 8). Instead, Jesus invites Peter and the other fishermen to leave their nets and to follow him. Back on shore, Peter accepts. “I’m all in,” he says to Jesus. This could be an interesting gig. Jesus offers Peter a side hustle that matches Peter’s passion for fishing. Jesus invites him to come and fish for people (v. 10). It will be another three years before Peter looks back. And when he does, Jesus finds him, calls him again, not to be a fisher of people this time, but to be a shepherd of sheep. What started out as a side hustle turned into a movement such as the world had never known and what today is called Christianity! Peter was there at the beginning.

His day job was catching fish! Then Jesus called him, and his life was never the same. Jesus does that: he shows up unexpectedly sometimes and asks us to do the craziest things! There is no indication that Peter was looking for a side hustle. Perhaps we aren’t either. We’re happy with our day job and the side hustles we already have. What we *don’t* need right now is Jesus to come to us, approaching us with another wild idea. Don’t need that. Don’t want that. Especially since whatever side hustle Jesus is offering us probably doesn’t involve income flowing into our pockets. More likely, Jesus’ side hustle offer is going to cost us.

So, what would you do if Jesus got into your boat? Would you politely ask him to get out? Would you pretend not to see and hear him? Would you listen to what he proposed, then decline his offer citing everyday commitments and family responsibilities? Would you, like Peter, drop everything leaving your job and family to follow Jesus?

It’s quite possible, and even probable, that Jesus is already in our boat, but we really haven’t recognized him. He works quietly. He doesn’t often do flashy miracles like he did for Peter. If we look carefully, though, we might recognize the work of Jesus in opportunities that come to us in the form of interruptions to our daily routine or a colleague who confides in you. It might be Jesus giving you a chance to lift someone’s spirit with a positive word or heal a wound with a loving gesture or right a wrong and change someone’s world.

When Jesus gets into our boats, we will probably sense our unworthiness, like Peter did. And who wouldn’t feel unworthy next to Jesus? But Jesus is not interested in what you’ve done in the past; he only wants to know what you will do for him now and in the future. Your perceived unworthiness is eclipsed by God’s love for you, Jesus’ death and resurrection for you, and the Holy Spirit’s working within you.

Jesus offers us the chance to “catch” some human “fish.” When we accept this side hustle, we begin to appreciate our lives as miracles of God’s grace! Peter and friends had so much fish, the boats started to sink. They were victims of their own success. It was at this moment that Jesus was able to get them out of their boats and take them down the road, enrolling them in a three-year training and internship program, which, by the way, they all flunked – repeatedly! In our text, Jesus gives us a few helpful hints in getting our side hustle started.

Put out to deep water. Remember what Jesus commanded Peter? *“Put out into the deep water”* (v. 4). Deep water. Far from shore. No bottom on which to stand. With creepy sea creatures swimming around us. This is where Jesus wants us to be: in the deep water. Out of our depth. In over our heads. Treading water for all we’re worth. Why? Because when we’re in the deep water we’re more likely to connect with Jesus who commands the winds and the waves. More likely to try new things and reach new people. More likely to make a real and lasting difference in someone’s life.

Yes, deep water is scary, but deep water is where the fish are! Peter and Andrew and James and John put out into deep water and they caught so many fish their boats swamped. The miraculous catch of fish was possible because they trusted Jesus enough to go out into the deep water. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we trusted God enough to put out into deep water, where it’s dark and uncertain, and discover as Peter did, that this is where the fish are? This is where the blessings are! There can be blessings in shallow water, too; the point is not the depth of the water, but the depth of our faith.

Let down your nets. Then Jesus says, *“Let down your nets”* (v. 4). This instruction simply means that we should use what we have. Jesus didn’t say, “Run over to Fleet Farm and buy yourself a Shakespeare Ugly Stik GX2 rod and reel with 10-pound line, get some fresh bait, and don’t forget sunscreen and a hat.” He said, “Use what you’ve got! Let down your nets where the fish are, and you will be successful.”

Too many times we think that to be true followers of Jesus, we need to have special training, special credentials, special tools, and a special title to do ministry. Not true! These guys were fishermen! Hello! They don’t have anything fancy. They used methods time-tested over centuries. Jesus encourages us to use the tools we have on hand, and to consecrate these tools to God’s service.

The Reverend Roy Almquist summarized his view of this text like this:

“On the surface, Luke’s story is about fishing, but I think we know it is really about taking a risk, daring to move out of our comfort zone and to sail into uncharted waters for the sake of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

“For many people today Christian community is a hobby or a pastime [a side hustle?], rather than a passion and a central source of identity. For many the Church has become a club, rather than a life-defining mission. And if we are not careful we can wake up and find that the Church is just another entry in the date-book of life, on equal footing with the bridge club, the golf game and the Rotary Club.

“Tradition calls this lesson...the story of the magnificent catch of fish. But in reality it is a call to the Church to move beyond the familiar and find new ways of sharing our faith with people who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We like to fish in the shallow, familiar areas, gathering people who are very much like ourselves — folks who know the hymns we like to sing, have had similar experiences to ours, and share our love for a time-honored style of worship. But today we are called to be mindful of those at the margins of society, those who are underwater in their lives and often feel like they are drowning.”

What does your side hustle for Jesus look like? Is it checking-in on a neighbor? Helping with Kids’ Club? Pounding nails with Habitat? Stocking shelves at the Food Pantry? Caring for an aging parent? Mentoring a student? Teaching music lessons or coaching a sport? When your deep passion and the world’s deep need collide, that’s a side hustle worthy of Jesus. So, when Jesus gets into your boat and offers you a side hustle, accept immediately, take the risk, and use what you have. What follows will be an amazing discipleship story.

Prayer: Dear God, come into our lives again and again, cast out our fear, invite us to live lives of meaning and purpose, and call us to follow you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Sources:

- Almquist, Roy. “Putting out into the deep.” Sermon at Washington Memorial Chapel. Wmchapel.org, February 14, 2010. Retrieved July 24, 2018.
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Side Hustle

Sunday, February 2019

Luke 5:1-11

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Uber is the newest trend in transportation. Uber is a ride taxi service which provides peer-to-peer ridesharing. You see the ads on television: happy people getting in and out of vehicles owned and operated by private citizens like you and me. Uber presents itself as a convenient and easy way for people who own a car to make a little extra cash. Uber is a side hustle.

A side hustle is any employment undertaken in addition to one’s regular job. The appeal of a side hustle is that you earn some extra cash on your own time, often from your own home or vehicle. Side hustles are nothing new. Whether it is selling Avon or Tupperware, or moonlighting evenings at Walmart, or mowing lawns on the weekend, everyone wants to make a few extra bucks.

Side hustles are becoming a necessity nowadays, especially for millennials (born 1980s-1990s) who are facing a whopping \$1 trillion in student loan debt, not to mention mortgages, car loans, and credit card debt. Most millennials need more than one source of income, and some studies suggest that as many as 35 percent of millennials are doing a side hustle to make ends meet.

Kate Taylor, writing for *Entrepreneur*, says that “a side hustle is a way to make some extra cash that allows you flexibility to pursue what you’re most interested in. It can also be your true passion — a chance to delve into fashion, travel or whatever it is you care about the most without quitting your day job.” That’s interesting: a side hustle might be your true passion.

In our text today, Jesus encounters some fishermen by the Sea of Galilee. As crowds press in on him wanting to hear the Word of God, Jesus steps into Simon Peter’s boat and teaches the crowd. When he is done teaching, Jesus has a conversation with Peter and the other fishermen. Jesus invites them to “*put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch*” (v. 4). Peter argues with Jesus saying that they have fished all night with no success; but he does as Jesus asks, and the haul of fish is so great it strains the nets to the breaking point and threatens to sink the boat.