

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

May 5, 2019
Third Sunday of Easter, Year C

The readings this week:

- Acts 9:1-6, (7-20) ◦ Psalm 30
- Revelation 5:11-14 ◦ John 21:1-19

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Faith and Fishing

When you really stop and think about it, sometimes this whole faith journey can seem a little strange and fantastic. Rational, logical sense-making leaves us with empty nets. It's only when we cast our nets the way Jesus compels us to that we come up with a net full of flopping, silvery, slippery faith. And this fishy faith can cause us to do some pretty backward-sounding things akin to Peter's putting his clothes ON to jump IN the lake. More than 2,000 years later human behaviors haven't changed, a fact that may or may not be comforting.

At least the disciples had seen Jesus in the flesh, walked and ministered with him for three years, and had the benefit of first-hand teaching. Yet, they still didn't recognize him until he fed them fish and bread. While we may not have seen him walk on the earth, we do have the powerful witness and record of those early adopters, yet we, too, still have trouble seeing Jesus at work in the world—until he feeds us bread and wine. Yep, faith can be a pretty “fishy” thing. It's sometimes solid, truly beautiful, often slippery and squirmy, and leaves us empty at our own devices yet abundantly full when we follow directions.

Whether we are called to lead God's people in a ministry vocation or whether we are called to love, tend, and feed one another and this beautiful, broken world, Jesus speaks to all of us as he spoke to Peter. “Do you love me?” If so, feed and tend. Oh, and follow. Yes, there's that, too. Give up doing your own thing, going wherever you want, and follow me even to those places and people to which you do not want to go.

Just reflect on this week's first reading from Acts. Ananias was called by God to go to a man who was a known murderer of Jesus' followers. Ananias was called to tend and feed for God's purposes. It surely didn't make sense for Ananias to cast his faith nets

on that side of life's boat, but he did follow God's instructions, and he fished out one of the greatest disciples and leaders of all time—Saul of Tarsus who would become the Apostle Paul.

Here's the thing: As disciples we are going to be called by faith into some uncomfortable places and situations. We can ignore the call and pretend we don't hear Jesus, or we can go fishing with whatever fragile nets of faith we can put our hands on. In the end, it's not about us at all. It's about that loving and amazing Lord who guides, feeds, and loves us no matter how stubborn, squirrely, or squeamishly we behave. There will still be bread from heaven. The wine will still be poured, and the Lord's supper served. We will be fed.

Instead of standing around waiting, wondering, or wandering off into our own little orbits, let's take a cue from Peter and go fishing. Drop a net or a line or an inhibition, and let Jesus guide hands, heart, and mind. Fishing for people is fishy business indeed, but with God all things are possible. So feed, tend, love, and serve, and let Jesus tell you where to cast your nets.

~ Sharron R. Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)



***Drop a net or a line or an inhibition,
and let Jesus guide hands, heart, and mind.***

___ **1st Reading:** [Acts 9:1-6, \(7-20\)](#)



Saul's persecution of the church in Jerusalem actually contributed to the spread of the gospel. Is your congregation confronted by barriers to the gospel that could be transformed into opportunities for greater ministry? Scripture records that Saul retold his conversion story several times. What opportunities exist in your church for sharing one another's salvation stories? How might you encourage people to both listen to and share one another's ongoing salvation stories? How do we know when we are called to do something for God? Do members of your congregation have opportunities to discuss, discern, or explore calling? What does Ananias teach us about the important role of Christians when those perceived to be enemies are converted? What would it take for your congregation to welcome a person who declared his or her conversion from a radical religion to Christianity? How does your congregation practice "hearing and discerning" God's voice when facing adversity? [Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Church](#)

___ **Psalm Reading:** [Psalm 30](#)

How does this psalm characterize the typical Christian life? What two emotions does God express in relation to His children? What are some memories that would inspire thanksgiving in your heart? It is also appropriate for Christians to express joy and thanksgiving before the Lord. Have you ever danced before the Lord? How do you express your thanksgiving? [Generations](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

O Living God of past and future,
we praise you
for this present moment.
Fill us with your joy and empower us with your Holy Spirit,
that our strength may be renewed
to sing a new song of your glory
in a world which longs for your justice and peace.
All this we ask in the name of Jesus,
in whom we become
your new creation.

~ *All Things New*, Rev. Susan A. Blain and Rev. Scott Ressman, United Church of Christ

A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is obeying him. It "consents," so to speak, to his creative love. It is expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree.

The more a tree is like itself, the more it is like him. If it tried to be like something else which it was never intended to be, it would be less like God and therefore it would give him less glory.

For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self. Trees and animals have no problem. God makes them what they are without consulting them, and they are perfectly satisfied.

With us it is different. God leaves us free to be whatever we like. We can be ourselves or not, as we please.

Thomas Merton *The New Seeds of Contemplation*
via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ **3rd Reading:** [Revelation 5:11-14](#)

How is the Lamb described? Who is he? What do we learn about him? How is he worthy? How should we react to this description of worship? How does this vision impact you in your relation to God? [John Frame and Vern Poythress](#)

___ **4th Reading:** [John 21:1-19](#)

Remember many of these men had been professional fishermen before they followed Jesus. Why do you think that they decided to go back to fishing now? Why would this fishing story be a significant moment for these disciples to relive? What do you make of Peter's sudden impulse to jump into the water and swim to Jesus? The word for a charcoal (anthracite) fire is used only one other time in the Gospels – in John 18:18, when Peter is in the courtyard where he denies Jesus. Why do you think John included this detail here? Jesus eating with his disciples was proof that he was real and not just their imagination – ghosts don't eat real food, after all! But why else was it significant for these men to sit and eat with their teacher and companion for the last three years? Think of the senses involved in this event – the smells of a charcoal fire, the taste of bread, the sound of the waves and voices calling for help with a huge catch of fish. In what ways did these senses play a role in the story, and how did Jesus use them to help the disciples (and particularly Peter) have a fresh experience with God? [Faith Element](#)