
YOU WANT US TO DO WHAT?

Last week, we talked about the dangerous act of worship.

- I wanted you to understand that when we commit ourselves to truly worshipping GOD,
 - to fully opening ourselves to what GOD has to offer,
 - we may come face-to-face with something from GOD that makes us want to say, “You want me to do what?”

I remember a cartoon that showed Abraham talking to GOD.

- The caption are the words of Abraham:
 - “Okay. Let me get this straight.
 - “The Egyptians get the oil and we have to cut off our what...?”

When we invite GOD into our lives,

- or really accept GOD’s invitation to be a part of our lives,
 - we need to be ready to respond to GOD.
 - And if you’re not ready, your answer to GOD may just be, “YOU want me to do what?”

In today’s Gospel, there were at least three times Simon Peter could have spoken these words;

- three times when he could have questioned GOD’s will for him.

First, was the invitation to support JESUS’ ministry.

- “Put your boat out a little way,” JESUS says to Simon.
 - By the way, what JESUS is doing here is making use of the best technology of His day in order to get His message across.
 - Water was a natural amplifier and by moving out on a boat a short way from shore, JESUS insured that more people could hear what HE had to say.
- Simon and his partners had been fishing all night, and then cleaning their nets all morning.
- They surely were tired, but then JESUS says to put the boats back out.
 - Simon could have said, “You want us to do what?”
 - But instead, he launches his boat and then sits there while he listens to JESUS.

As he listens, he begins to enter into what we call “the partnership of the gospel.”

- This is what happens when we come and participate—fully participate—in worship.

This is much more than just sing, pray, give, listen.

- These activities are just passive participation in the gospel.
- But when we open our hearts and minds to GOD’s possibilities;
 - when we understand that GOD vision includes us,
 - and when we say, “yes,” to GOD’s invitation, we become part of the gospel story,
 - we become partners in the gospel:
 - partnering in the praise of GOD, in the ministry of JESUS, and announcing the love of GOD to others.

This is what happened to Simon, hearing what JESUS had to say.

- Because he fully opened himself to JESUS’ message, and moreover, discovered who JESUS was and is,
 - he fell in tune with what GOD was and is doing in JESUS, and a unique and special relationship was created.

But that led to the second occasion Simon had to question GOD’s will.

Having finished His preaching, JESUS tells Simon and his partners to put out to the deeper water and let down their nets.

- Again, Simon and the others had been fishing all night and they hadn't caught anything.
 - He even says that very thing—the closest he comes to saying, “You want us to do what?”
- Previously, JESUS had healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law, and HE had been preaching in that region for some time.
- Simon had a sense for what JESUS was capable of doing, so instead of saying, “No,” or even just questioning HIM, Simon Peter says, “Yet, if YOU says so, I will let down the nets.”
 - Simon's relationship with JESUS has changed because of what JESUS has done and because of what JESUS has said.

So, the fishermen let out the nets and they make a huge catch—so large, in fact that their nets were strained to the limit.

- This catch was another demonstration of power and of potential.
- It was an act that showed the blessings that can flow to others—overflow, in fact.
 - More fish than two boats can handle;
 - more blessing than we can imagine;
 - more than we deserve.

That recognition leads to humility.

- “Go away from me,” Simon says, “for I am a sinful man.”
 - Simon knows his fault.
 - He knows his unworthiness for GOD's blessings.
- That's a hard thing to do—to be honest about our flaws and shortcomings.
 - Yet it is into this openness that GOD can enter and accomplish new things.

You may recognize the name, Chuck Colson.

- He was one of the architects of the Watergate break in and for that he went to prison.
 - In prison, at the lowest point in his life, Colson entered into a relationship with the LORD,
 - and then founded Prison Fellowship, the largest non-profit serving prisoners, former prisoners, and their families.
 - GOD's possibilities took root in a moment of humility.

When Simon Peter saw what JESUS could offer to him and to others, he was overwhelmed and responded with humility.

- By the way, this point in the Gospel is the first occurrence of Simon's other name, Peter.
 - Peter, means “rock”, and it is the name given to Him by JESUS,
 - who saw in this sinful man the faith on which the Christian Church could be built.

Names in the Bible matter.

- They tell us things about the person who bears them.
- Jacob, the second son of Isaac, was given a name that means “grasps at the heel,” because he was born holding on to his twin brother's foot that he might be born first and receive the birthright.
- Jacob can also mean, “usurper” and Jacob did indeed manage to trick his brother out of that birthright.
 - Later, though, Jacob had a dream in which he grappled with the angel of GOD, and at the end of that dream he was given a new name, “Israel”, which means, “wrestles with GOD.”
 - The nation of Israel are the descendants of Jacob—Israel—and their history has clear been one of wrestling with GOD.

Peter—Rock—could be a solid foundation for the church, but could also be a boulder rolling out of control.

- Yet Simon Peter became the leader of the early Christian Church and the Church continues today, in part because of his leadership.

And then there is our identity—Christians—followers of CHRIST—sinners to saints.

- But a new identity also leads to a challenge extended.

JESUS tells Simon Peter, “From now on, you will be people catchers.”

- Again, Simon could have said, “You want me to do what?”
- But think about it:
 - Fish versus people >> nice clean people versus smelly fish.
 - Sounds good, doesn't it?
- Then again, think about some of the people you've met.
 - Think about the needs of some of the people you've encountered.
 - Nice clean people? Maybe not so much.
 - But these are the people JESUS comes to, isn't it?

Challenge comes with vision when it comes from JESUS.

- The vision of JESUS is to bring people—all people—into the Kingdom of GOD;
 - to create relationships into which GOD can enter.
- How exciting it is when you know where you are headed and have the resources to get there.
 - JESUS' vision includes all of us and He promises all that we will need.

In casting His vision, JESUS gives Simon Peter and his partners a vision and a purpose.

- At the end of your life, do you want to say you just caught fish?
 - There's nothing wrong with that.
 - It's a valuable service to feed family and others.
- But what about healing those who are broken?
 - Caring for those who have no one?
 - Bring people into a relationship with GOD?
 - Offering people eternal life?
- JESUS casts that vision for us as well and invites us to the same purpose.
 - For what do you want to be remembered?
 - What is it that can really fill your life with a sense of mission?

From now on, you will catch people with GOD's message,

- GOD's actions,
- GOD's promises,
- GOD's love.

From now on, you have only two responses that you can make:

- 1) “You want us to do what?”
- 2) “Here I am, LORD. Send me!”