

Sermon Transcript for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, July 4, 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We begin with the Gospel. Peter had been out all night fishing. He was ready to go home, grab a beer, and go to sleep. And then Jesus comes up to him and says, "Can you take me out on the boat a little bit? I need to preach to these people". And Peter's going, "Okay. Yeah. We'll take you out". And they go out. Jesus preaches for who knows how long. We don't know. So, Peter's going, "Okay, fine. Amen. Yes, let's go home". And then Jesus says, "Let's just take the boat out a little farther. Go into the deep area and cast out your nets". And at this point you can imagine Peter, rebelling just a little bit. They've washed their nets. All the grime and the muck of the lake... If you've ever been in a lake, all the stuff that grows on the edges, the algae and the muck and the mire, gets on the nets and they've just washed them. They just got it all cleaned. All they want to do is go to bed. "Let's go out a little bit further," says Jesus. "Yes, Master." Now, you notice Peter says "Master". He doesn't say "Lord". He doesn't. He says "Master," as like, "Okay, I'm going to do what you've called me to do because I know you're in charge. I don't feel like doing it, but you're the Master. So, okay". So they go out and they throw out the nets. Remember, they had caught nothing so far. And they're probably thinking, "Deep water, early morning, there's no way there's any fish there. They're going where it's warm. They're going where the food is. They're not in the deep, not at this point of the day". They throw their nets out. And lo and behold, they catch more than they've ever caught in their entire lives. So, they start hauling in and they realize one boat can't carry it all. So they call their partners, James and John. They come. They load both boats up. And they're sinking. These boats are so overloaded that they're sinking. And at this point Peter's going, "Oh my word, what just happened?" You can imagine... And how does he respond? He bows down. He says, "Depart from me, for I'm a sinful man". See, Peter responded to the abundant blessing of God by recognizing that he deserved absolutely none of this. See, Jesus came, and even though Peter was not exactly excited about what's going on, He did what the Lord told him to do. But, when he realized what is going on, that he is in the face of God, or at the very least God's prophet, and that God has shown up in majesty and might with this overabundance of gifts... Hopefully that sounds familiar to you... The overabundance of the blessing of God, so much so that they're almost in threat of drowning. They begin to realize that they deserve none of this, that they don't deserve to be in the presence of this prophet of God, who, as we know, is actually God Himself. And faced with the generosity and the love of God, he falls down on his knees, recognizing he does not deserve God's grace because he hasn't lived up to the standard that God has required.

We talked about the 10 commandments and the grace of God that He has saved us. And He gave us these laws, these words that we are called to follow. And if we are honest, if we look at the 10 commandments, if we look at each one of them and we go, "Yeah. I didn't do that one today, or that one, or pretty much any of them up to the standard that God expects. In fact, I don't deserve to be saved by God. I am a poor, miserable sinner". And yet, in the grace of God, He gives more abundantly than we could possibly imagine or use, and most definitely more than we ever deserve. And what a blessing that is because we don't get what we deserve from God. Think about that phrase for a while. We do not get what we deserve. What a joyous thing that is because we get everything that we don't deserve. We get the grace of God. We get the mercy of God. We get the love of God. We get His salvation. We get His body and blood for the strengthening of our faith. We become children by adoption. We didn't earn that. We didn't deserve it. He gives it to us freely. And more abundantly than we can imagine does He give His grace. And how often do we take that grace and grumble and complain about it, that it's not what we really wanted, or it's not quite the way we wanted it?

So, this is at the beginning of the call of Peter. Now, we look at another situation of the call of God, and we look at Elijah. And Elijah is towards the end of his calling. He's been serving God ever since he'd been called, and he's getting ready towards the end of his ministry. In fact, he's just had the mountain top experience. He's been on the mountain with two altars, all the prophets of Baal, and then him by himself. And they cry out to their gods and they pray the god that is real to show up and burn the sacrifice. And Baal, surprise of all surprises, doesn't show up because he's not really a god. So, he doesn't burn the sacrifice. God, on the other hand, all Elijah says is, "Show us Your glory," and suddenly not only is the sacrifice burned up, but the wood underneath the sacrifice and the stones. Imagine how intense it had to be for the stones to disappear and be burned. And then not only the stones, but the water that they had poured over it and the basin around it, that trench, all that was burned up. So, there was nothing but a charred, dry spot. God showed up in a miraculous way. God showed His power and His majesty and the people said, "We'll follow Him". So, they killed the prophets of Baal and everything like this. And yet, what happens next? Elijah flees. Why? Because the queen said... Because she worshiped Asherah, which is another god in the area... And the people hadn't completely given up after the old gods. They just decided it was probably better to show up on the guy that actually set the fire, whether or not they actually believed it or not, or followed it or not. They seem to be wishy-washy. So, the queen threatens to kill Elijah, and it seems like she can succeed. So, he just... He's done. "Man, God, I've been serving you for how many years? I'm tired. I literally had the mountain top experience, and now I'm back in the valley again and I'm just ready to die". That's what he's doing. He's having a pity party in his cave as he waits for God to just let him die. But, God comes to him. He comes in majesty and might, or at least initially that's where we might think He comes, in a great wind that breaks apart rocks. How mighty and powerful is that wind that it can break rocks apart? And then a fire and an earthquake, and yet God is not in any of those. He is in a still small voice, in a low whisper. He comes to Elijah and says, "Take heart. I have not abandoned you. And you are not the only one left. There are 7,000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal. You are not alone. And I still have work for you to do".

Now, I don't know about any of you, but there may be times in your life where you feel like, "Can I just go to bed? I'm tired. Can I just be done with all of this? I've had enough. There's enough pain and suffering in this world, I just don't want to deal with this anymore". And yet, God is calling us not to be strong and mighty in and of ourselves, but to trust in the still small voice of God, to trust that God shows up in ways that we might never expect, to trust that God will always give us more than we could possibly ever use or imagine, that God will continue to bless not just us, but our nation, because we are called to be faithful to His Word that the next generation will hear. See, it's not just about us. God wants us to be ready in season and out. As Peter says later on in his epistle, "That we might be prepared to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you".

Elijah had lost hope. He was tired. And God comes and strengthens him and nourishes him and gives him hope. He says, "You're still called. And not only that, there's somebody following after you who will serve Me as well as you did. Elijah, you're not alone. I am with you and My Word will continue to go forth and share that grace and mercy". Be strong and courageous in the Lord because that is where we find our strength. And you have Peter. Peter, who's just all over the place with boldness. He's always speaking before he thinks. He's always the man of action. And yet, here later on in Peter, he says, "Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, and a tender heart, and a humble mind".

See, we are not called to change everybody else's mind. It's not our job to convince everybody else that we are right. That's not our job. That gets old and tiring after a while. It's our job to trust in the Word of the Lord

and trust that He will do all good things. And we are called simply to live our lives in our individual callings and vocation. Who are we? Where has God placed us? We are brothers and sisters. We are fathers and mothers. We are neighbors. We are citizens. We are children. All of these are our vocation. All of these are our calling. This is who we are.

And God calls us, that this is who we are. This is what God has given us. And through that, we can then bless those around us, showing the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. It's not a matter of trying harder to do something different to convince God that we're right or that we're serving Him. It's a matter of trusting God that He has placed us where He wants us to be and given us His words so that we might share those with those around us, that we might be a blessing to those that we come in contact with.

Think about this, if we would seek to have sympathy and brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind, that'd be plenty of work for us to do. But, we do not need to be afraid no matter what happens. See, Peter is encouraging His people. God has called us for a purpose. He's encouraging us as well. There's suffering and hardship in this world. There is struggle in our own lives. There are days when we just want to say, "I'm tired and I'm done". There are days when we don't know how we're going to make it through. There are days when we seem to have been given a lot more than we could possibly handle. But then, God shows up and gives us abundantly more than we need, abundantly more than we could possibly imagine, so that we have hope.

That's where we are called, to demonstrate our hope in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. See, this Gospel message is not totally about everybody needs to be fishers of men, everybody needs to seek out somebody, share the Gospel with them. You need to try harder to share the Word of God with everybody around you. That's not really what this passage is about. This passage is about understanding that we have a God who is gracious and loving. And when we are at the end of our ropes, when we think there's nothing more that we can do, God is there. And He will be there always to the very end of the age, no matter what.

And God gives us all good things for which it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. It's as simple as that. Thank Him for all the good that He has done. Praise Him because He is the God of the universe who shows Himself in the humility of man. Serve him. We know what He calls us to do. Be humble and kind to those around us. And always be ready to give a statement of hope, a reason for the hope that we have. It's not the hope that we have, "I've done all the right things. That's where my hope lies".

No, our hope lies in that Christ has done it all for us and then given it to us as a gift. What a joy it is to know that, in our baptisms, we were adopted into the family of God. And as children of God, we receive all the benefits of our big brother, Jesus Christ, who has done it for us and given it to us freely. So, be courageous, but be humble and loving. And trust that God will guide you each and every day of your life. Even on those days where you feel like you got nothing left, He will be with you, and there's nothing to be afraid of. Absolutely nothing. Nothing that comes our way can take us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

And Christ Jesus loves us so much that He lives with us and promises that we will live with Him for all eternity, and that we need not even fear death, or sin, or Satan himself, or this world. Well, if you don't need to fear Satan or death, what else is there to be afraid of?

Hope in the Lord. Put your trust in the Lord and hold fast to His promises because He is a prodigal God. He gives more abundantly than we could possibly imagine. And He will never leave us nor forsake us.

May that grace and mercy and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.