

“Fishing for People”
Mark 1:14-20
Sunday, January 22, 2012
The Rev. Sharon Snapp-Kolas, preaching

Scripture. Prayer.

Opening.

Today’s sermon is about evangelism. It is about “fishing for people,” which is what Jesus calls Simon Peter and his brother, Andrew to do in the scripture passage I just read. Jesus then calls James and his brother, John, as well.

Jesus calls these fishermen to keep on fishing, but to go after a new kind of fish.

So...

I’m going to do the sermon a bit differently this morning. And I will need the ushers to help me.

[Ask the ushers to hand out “My Faith Story,” (available from the church office, with thanks to David McGlocklin and the Fall 2010 Riverside District trainings). As they do this, continue on with the explanation.]

I. “My Faith Story”

As the ushers are distributing the handout, I will continue.

In a few moments I am going to walk you through a portion of the exercise described on the handout. We won’t have time to do everything on the handout. But the first thing I need you to do is to get into groups of 3. So, find 2 other people seated near you and agree to be a group of 3. Go ahead and do that, as the ushers continue to distribute the handouts. (Pause, 1 min.)

Does everyone have a handout?

Raise your hand if you do not have a handout. (Pause, ½ min.)

Is everyone in groups of 3? Raise your hand if you do not have a group to be in; ushers, please help the remaining folks to get into groups of 3. (Pause, ½ min.)

Now...Here's what we're going to do. We will have 3 minutes of silence, during which you will jot down a few notes about your personal faith story. Most of us could tell the story in a number of different ways, depending on which part of our life we decide to choose from. So, you will pick a faith story from your life, and jot down a few notes about it. And here's how you will do that:

Take a look at the handout with me. You will see there are 3 sections: Before Christ, Then Christ, and After Christ.

The goal is to come up with a story you can tell someone about your experience of Jesus Christ. Your life before you knew Him. What happened when you came to know Him. And how your life is different now, since you have come to know Him.

Here's the catch: you have to get your faith story boiled down to one minute. 60 seconds. So keep it short, concise, and true. Here are 6 Rules to keep in mind: (these rules are from the handout):

1. Don't be long-winded. Your story should be told in less than one minute. If it is longer, keep trying until you can, in a clear, steady voice, tell your faith story in 1 minute.
2. Don't be fuzzy. Too many people tend to wander into weird places. They leave out essential details while not being clear about what they meant to say.
3. Don't be superior in your story. Focus on how Christ changed you, not on how you serve Christ.

4. Get rid of religious language that non-Christians won't understand and that will turn them off. Use words that are accessible to the person you are speaking to.
5. Leave out weird stories. Save your miracle story for a later conversation; people aren't impressed and are usually turned off by these stories. Don't lead with the "I saw Jesus in my PB&J."
6. Don't put other faith traditions down. In our multi-cultural world, people want to know more about why you are following Christ than about how others have gotten it wrong.

After the 3 minutes of jotting down notes for your faith story, I will instruct you to turn to your group buddies, your group of 3. I will time you so that each of you gets 1 minute to share your faith story with the group.

And then I will talk a bit more about today's reading from Mark.

OK. We're just about ready to start. If you have any questions during the process, just raise your hand and one of the ushers will come to you.

II. Writing My Faith Story

All right. You have 3 minutes to write your faith story. And begin!

(Pause. 3 minutes.)

And stop!

I know. It wasn't enough time to refine your story. But you will have plenty of time to take this handout home and do that. Right now, we're just doing a quick trial run.

III. Sharing My Faith Story

So, the next step is to share your stories with each other. Quickly decide who is going to share 1st. (Pause, 10 seconds) Ready? Go!

(Pause, 1 minute).

And stop!

Quickly decide who is going to share next. (Pause, 10 seconds) Ready? Go!

(Pause, 1 minute).

And stop!

I think we know who the last one to share is going to be... Ready? Go!

(Pause, 1 minute).

And stop!

IV. Reflections

How was that for you? Was it fun? Exciting? Scary? Annoying? Boring? Did it make you feel angry, to be asked to practice evangelism on a quiet Sunday morning? Maybe you had expected to come to church and rest in the Holy Spirit. Maybe you came to church with a particular need today, and doing evangelism is not the particular need you came with. Maybe evangelism – at least evangelism in terms of telling your faith story – is something you simply do not do, and do not want to do. Maybe you have had some negative experiences with evangelism.

I want to reassure you that any response you have to this morning's activity is OK. Fine. Legitimate.

Jesus is not worried about how you feel. Well, let me take that back. Jesus cares about you. Everything about you. So however you are feeling this morning, Jesus is right there with you. If you are sad or depressed or grieving or angry. If you are wildly happy and ecstatic. If you are bored out of your mind. If you are scared or lonely or sick or tired or in pain. Jesus

cares. And Jesus is right there, in it with you. Jesus walks with you, in whatever you are going through.

At the same time, Jesus doesn't need you to feel good in order for you to follow Him. Jesus did not care that Peter and Andrew had a fishing business to run and financial issues to worry about. Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." At the end of the gospel of Mark, in chapter 16, verse 15, Jesus says, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." Matthew puts it this way, in his gospel, the 28th chapter, 19th verse: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

Closing.

Look with me, for a moment, at the front of your worship bulletin. Our mission is written at the top, above the picture. Will you say it with me?

"We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Are you ready to answer the call? Are you ready to follow Jesus? Are you ready to transform the world and, in the process, be transformed yourself?

Are you ready to fish for people?

Take this handout home with you, the "My Faith Story" handout. Rewrite and refine your faith story. In prayer, make a list of people you'd like to share your story with. And then allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as to the right timing.

Jesus is calling you to fish for people. Will you answer the call?

Amen.