

Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Rev. Michael Bird Transcript

“Say Yes, Cast Your Nets, and Follow Me.”

“We are tired. We have been through a long night that has lasted two years plus...and yet the gospel of Jesus Christ shows us time and time again that when we are in that most vulnerable state, when we think we cannot go on, when possibilities seem to have vaporized, that’s exactly when we take a risk, when we engage our faith, and God makes something extraordinary happen.”

Today’s story of Jesus calling his first disciples to cast their nets despite their exhaustion and dejection should resonate with us deeply in February 2022, preaches Trinity’s vicar the Rev. Michael Bird. Luke 5 is the perfect reminder that as Christians we are called to ask ourselves at all times “what is the next thing that is being presented for us” and dare to act. Now is not the time for nostalgia, fatigue, or complacency, but for courage, faith, and fellowship. The readings are Isaiah 6:1–8, Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, and Luke 5:1–11.

Sermon Transcript:

In the name of the true and living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.

So for those of you who this morning were just on time or those of you who are watching us online and didn't get in early, you need to rewind. When this service is over, please go back to the prelude, those of you who missed it in the room, go home, rewind, and watch the prelude because that's what happens when you have one night's notice, but you love God and you trust your friends and amazing beautiful things happen because God makes things possible. Thank you, Sonya. So today's gospel starts like this. Imagine we had the extraordinary prelude that we had this morning, and when Sonya had finished with those incredible notes glorifying God in every possible way, I walked up to her and said, that was great. Could you do it again? That's what it must have been like to be Peter. Peter had finished a night's worth of fishing. He was on the shore with the men from his boat and the other boat. They were washing their nets. They were done with a capital D. And Jesus who had been teaching on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, and if you don't know, Lake Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee, so a big old sea. Jesus who had been teaching on the shores of Lake Gennesaret turns to Peter and asks him to take him out a little way. I know you may be tired. I know you're taking care of your nets, but could you get me a little bit away from the shore so I could continue to do my job, continue to do my work, continue to teach and share my love with all the people who have gathered along the shore and Peter does it. But that wasn't enough.

When Jesus had finished teaching, he turned to Peter again and he asked Peter to take that boat out into the deep water and cast his nets into the sea and wait and see what happens. Now imagine being Peter in that moment. Let's give Peter a little bit of credit, which is actually not normally my thing to do. Let's assume that Jesus did not hypnotize him into this incredible act. Let's assume that Jesus' teaching was compelling and yet some piece of Peter, some faith flame kindled in him said, "I know I'm tired. I know

I've been through the mill. I know I should be going home, but I'm just going to do this thing. I'm not going to make the safe choice. I'm not going to choose the comfortable path. I'm not going to play the tired card or the time card." And he casts his nets and the nets are so filled with fish that the other boat has to be called, and between the two of them, the boats are so full of these fish that they almost begin to sink and Peter's response isn't, how crazy is this? Look what I did. Peter's response is, how could this happen to me? A sinful person. And Jesus who recognizes his repentance then asks the third thing, "Follow me and I will help you catch people." Rewind that for half a second. Peter's profession. He was a fisherman. He had been out all night with zero success. He was on the shore cleaning his nets. He was done and then he did this thing and in comes maybe the greatest haul of fish in his career. And Jesus says, "Follow me" and he leaves the boats and he leaves the fish. He leaves everything he might have had in the world, his worldly possessions, the measurement of his success, and he goes and follows. I'm not going to spend forever unpacking this for us this morning, but I would raise this for me and for you. We're tired. We have been through a long night, a night that has lasted two years plus.

We have seen things and heard things and experienced things that we would have denied existing in our wildest imaginations. We are tired and we are done and yet the gospel of Jesus Christ shows us time and time again that when we are in that most vulnerable state, when we think we cannot go on, when possibilities seem to have vaporized right in front of our eyes, that's exactly when we take a risk, we engage our faith and God makes something extraordinary happen. If we are to believe the truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which I do to my very core, we have to ask ourselves what is the next thing that is being presented for us? Out of all of this stuff, what will God help us make of it? Not the safe and comfortable, not the measurements of our worldly success, not nets filled with fish over there, but unburdened, freed by the love of Jesus Christ, how will we move forward not to reclaim the nostalgic normal of two years ago or 20 years ago or dare I say it 200 or 300 years ago, but where will we, this loving community of Christ Jesus, go next together, because we will dare to say, yes. We will dare to cast our nets. We will dare to follow. We will dare to make disciples and be disciples. In my fantasy world, I then turn to Sonya, and she'd sing the whole thing all over again just to prove my points, but you get it, don't you? This is the time. This is what God has led us to. This is how we are equipped by the Holy Spirit to move forward in new and wonderful ways in the name of Jesus Christ with all humility together. That's what people are waiting for just outside these doors, all across our city and all across our world.

Amen.