

Fishers of People
January 22, 2012
(Epiphany 3 – Year B)
Mark 1: 14-20

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

There are points in life when you know that everything will change - as we become something else:

Getting your drivers license - to become a driver.

Finishing high school - to become a graduate.

Getting married - to become a spouse.

There are events where we can mark the time when we became something new.

One of those times for me was February 27, 1991.

Susan had been miserable on the day before, because she was nine months pregnant and five days past her due date.

She had gone to her doctor that day, to ask how long she would have to wait before the doctor would induce labor.

Friends called us each night, anxiously asking if we had become parents yet.

And a friend advised us that if Susan walked for a really, really long time, that might do the trick.

So that evening we went to the Galleria in Houston to see the movie *Home Alone*.

And after the movie, we walked and walked and walked around the indoor skating rink, yet went home without a single sign of labor pains.

But that night, at 2 in the morning, Susan woke me up and said that her water had broken.

Hurriedly, we packed our bags, called our parents and put the brand new car seat in the back seat.

In the rush to the hospital, I locked the backdoor of our house.

Yet I took a brief moment to mark the time, realizing that the next time I would walk back into our house, everything would have changed.

I marked the time, because I knew that I would come back changed, for I

would have become - a father.

Of course, while Susan and I were expecting our first child, we did all sorts of things to prepare to be parents.

Yet becoming a father had nothing to do with a checklist of things that I had to achieve.

Because, ready or not, on February 27, 1991, at 5:50 pm, I can mark the time that I immediately became a father.

In the Gospel story from Mark about the call of the first followers of Jesus, we tend to get uncomfortable by the rashness of the fishermen who dropped their nets to immediately follow Jesus. The first followers of Jesus can mark the time that they changed from fishermen - and immediately became fishers of men.

In the Gospel story from Mark, as Jesus passes along the Sea of Galilee, he sees Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea-- for they were fishermen.

And Jesus says to them:

“Follow me - and I will make you fish for people.”

The old King James Version of the Bible can sometimes be a poor translation of the original Greek of the New Testament.

Yet in this verse of scripture, the King James Version leads us to a better translation of the Greek, as Jesus more literally says to Simon and Andrew:

“I will make you to *become* fishers of men and women.”

Jesus is not inviting Simon and Andrew to a new hobby or skill, the skill of fishing for people.

Instead Jesus is inviting Simon and Andrew to become someone new, to *become* fishers of people.

For being a follower of Jesus has less to do with what a checklist of things to achieve.

A follower of Jesus has more to do with who we are becoming.

And we mark this time, this moment of becoming a new creation, becoming a fisher of people, at our baptism.

At our baptism, we can mark the exact moment when Jesus immediately made us become a fisherwoman or a fisherman of people.

And Jesus makes us a new creation by calling to us, saying:

“Come, follow me.

I will make you to *become* fishers of men and women.”

And we become a new person, a new creation, when we look up from our nets and see the shadow of a mighty cross.

We become fishers of people when we take up the cross and think of others - before we think of ourselves.

Every day of my life,

Every day of your life,

I have to remind myself that Jesus has made me into a new person.

Jesus has made me to become a fisher of people.

Jesus has made me to become someone who will drop my nets and pick up the cross, daily.

Yesterday, I was pondering this scripture about Jesus making me become a fisher of people who takes up the cross.

And yesterday, my wife, Susan, had to work all day Saturday at a school function.

And yesterday afternoon, I got all comfortable on the couch, preparing to watch the Baylor vs. Missouri basketball game, a battle between two top 5 teams.

I had on my comfortable sweatpants and a sweatshirt.

I even had on my Baylor baseball cap that I received as a gift for Christmas.

(My allegiance to Baylor could be interpreted as yet another sign of Jesus making me to become a new person).

Anyway, just as the Baylor basketball game was starting, Susan sent me a text.

In her text, she said:

“When I left home this morning, I didn’t know it was going to be so cold out and am freezing.

Can you bring my coat up to me at my school?”

My very first thought was not worthy of someone who Jesus had made to become a fisher of people.

My very first thought was not to take up my cross and to deny myself, by getting up off the couch and missing the tip-off of the basketball game.

Yet then I thought about the scripture that I would be preaching on today,

I thought about how, in my baptism, Jesus has immediately made me to become a new person.

And so I am now able to mark the exact time when I went from casting my nets for my own fish, in my sweatpants and a ball cap –

To immediately dropping my nets, getting my fanny up off the couch and delivering a coat to my wife.

The call of Jesus to follow him does not have to be a monumental event of throwing our nets down on the shores of Galilee.

The call of Jesus, making us into a new person, happens each and every day, in the smallest of circumstances.

And the call of Jesus is answered when we throw down our selfish concerns and become fishers, fishers who care about other people.

We can mark the exact moment when Jesus showed us that he is a fisherman for all people, when he immediately opened up his arms for us on the hard wood of the cross.

And just as I can mark the exact moment when I immediately became a father,

I can mark the exact moment, May 17, 1964, the day of my baptism, when Jesus called me to become a fisher of people.

And all of us can mark the times in our day when we put down our nets from catching fish, take up the cross and become fishers, catching and caring for other people.

For in our baptism,

In our everyday lives,

Jesus makes us to become something new.

Jesus makes us to become daily carriers of his cross, catching and caring for others.

For beside the daily shores of our life, Jesus makes us to become -
fishers of people.

AMEN.

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