

# Catch and Release

*The Rev. Geoff Parker to Foreside Community Church - Falmouth, ME*

Sunday, February 10, 2019

Scripture: [Luke 5:1-10](#)

One of my favorite things about calling stories, stories in which God, or God's prophets, call individuals to a new life and a new ministry... is that there is a pattern that exists in all of them that goes like this.

- An astounding vision of God's presence.
- A call to ministry.
- An excuse for why, "I couldn't possibly"
- And finally, God's, "No really," Moment.

Think about it, really: The prophet Isaiah, "I have an unclean mouth," (which I think just means he swears a lot, and, you know, that happens.) Jeremiah? "I'm too young." Amos? "I'm a simple farmer." Jonah has one of the best, "I don't want to, you're too nice, you always forgive everybody, God."

What's your excuse? Somebody comes to you with an amazing new adventure where you might do some good, what's your first moment where all the blood rushes out of your head, and your shoulders go up, and you just kind of freeze up? What do you say?

At our book group, we were talking about how we care for one another when things are very difficult, when someone has lost a spouse, or a parent, or a child... When there has been a difficult diagnosis.

And it happens again today, with Peter. There is this amazing display of God's presence, the amazing catch they were not expecting... and Peter says: "Go away! I'm a sinful man!"

Ah, everyone's favorite excuse: "I can't possibly help you, God. You see? I am just no good."

The thing that has come to me the most this week is that Jesus's miraculous fishing expedition here is a call to his fishing disciples-to-be, but it is also a sign of what this ministry will be like.

See, if you notice what happens with the fish here... it says "the nets were beginning to break." See, fishing folk will tell you that equipment is part of how you get the fish from the water to the boat. Lobster wars have been fought for over a hundred years here on our coast, angry competitors cutting their traps free. Even more so for our ancient disciples here, their nets knotted by hand, the materials more costly than any individual haul they might bring in... when your nets break, it takes you out of commission and fishing. Even more, once the fish are in the boat, they almost sink it. And all that costs.

It will be an experience of incredible abundance and undeniable risk. And, from the first, Peter loves Jesus so much that he is afraid of him. Afraid of what he means for his life; afraid of what we all fear, that to love someone and to follow a path with someone, is to wrap yourself in the reality of loss and grief... one day.

For us, too. When we make ourselves present to another's pain, it is both an exquisite connection of one human to another, and sometimes it can feel like it is too much... like the very nets of our compassion might burst. Anyone ever had a friend, or have you ever had something so heavy in your heart that you say, "Don't talk to me about that, it'll make me... cry."

And, yet.

Jesus calls us from where we are: fishers to fish, speakers to speak, healers to heal... but with the abundant love and risk of God's promise and God's justice at the heart of it. Sometimes, it will feel like our too worn nets, or words, or hands will not be able to hold the world's need... but we do. Captured by the overflowing love of Jesus, and the way he risked all he was in love.

And then we are sent... Sent to show others how we were caught up. Sent to show others the tenderness and fraying of this ministry: our excuses, and the love that allows us to overcome them, the risk and the reward beyond any imagining.

Every single one of you here today, has found a way to show up... despite all the excuses we might dream up... maybe afraid, but undeterred.

Welcome to this calling all over again.