

*Luke 5:1-11 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So, they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

This is the first time Jesus gives them a whole bunch of fish after they fished all night and caught nothing. I'm sure that He had a smile on his face when they were hauling in the fish. The second time He gave them a lot of fish was after His resurrection when the disciples came out of hiding. A few of them, including Peter, James and John, said: 'Let's go fishing.' They fished all night and caught nothing. From the shore, a man calls out, throw out your nets on the lee side of the boat. (John 21: 6-15) *When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after He was raised from the*

*dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

In both cases, at the beginning and the ending of His earthly ministry, Jesus gives the fishermen fish. He serves those in need, but also reminds them that they are fishers of people. They had a lot more fish both times than they needed, and there were enough leftovers to feed the poor. Jesus taught His disciples something about God's *agape* type love that we saw in 1 Corinthians 13 last Sunday.

This sacrificial love gives without expecting return. It gives because it is of the nature of the person to do so. A fireman rushes into a house on fire, taking precautions as he is trained, and rescues someone from certain death. He doesn't think a whole lot about, 'Well, the floor could collapse' 'My oxygen might cut out and the smoke kill me too.' Or 'What if there are no survivors?'

We call these people heroes, but they are living out *agape* type love, the same Greek word for love that we see in John 3:16, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to die for us...*" We are free to respond to that love and then live in that love and finally give out of that love as Jesus did. The greater love Jesus spoke of giving one's life for one's friends was done by Him on the cross for us before any of us were born. We are simply invited to respond to that gift. Many do and walk in the light as He is in the light.

One author (Chamberlain) speaks of three aspects of Jesus' love: self giving, tending, as He says to Peter, 'tend my sheep' and truth-seeking love. Let's take our Gospel as a spring board to look at one of those expressions of Jesus' love: self-giving. How would we know what happened to Him on his forty days alone in the wilderness unless He told His disciples, unless He gave them that information about Himself? How would we know what He experienced at His baptism or what was said to Him by our heavenly Father. How would we know what the woman at the well said without Him sharing that information? How would we and they know what He experienced on the cross unless He told them?

At the Last Supper, Jesus said (Luke 22:16), "*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.*" He tells them that one of them will betray Him. (Chamberlain) "His behavior on this night was not different from other times, but because of the dramatic significance of this Passover night, we have unusual illustration of how to love at the worst of times. He wants to be totally clear on His mission which He handed off to them and to

us. So, He washes their feet saying once again in a way that could not be missed that the greatest should be servant of all. This self giving is our model.

When someone different walks into our lives in a church family or at work, we can figure out all the reasons to justify our dislike or prejudice. Jesus, however, was a victim of that. He asks us to turn it around and be a servant to that person. Maybe not wash their feet, but pray for them. You can try to get to know them and give them the gift of listening, the gift of understanding, the gift of respect.

Watch for Jesus' self-giving love when a woman of the street came in to care for Him. <sup>TM</sup> *Jesus was at Bethany, a guest of Simon the Leper. While he was eating dinner, a woman came up carrying a bottle of very expensive perfume. Opening the bottle, she poured it on his head. Some of the guests became furious among themselves. 'That's criminal! A sheer waste! This perfume could have been sold for well over a year's wages and handed out to the poor.'* They swelled up in anger, nearing bursting with indignation over her. But Jesus said, *'Let her alone. Why are you giving her a bad time? She has just done something wonderfully significant for me. You will have the poor with you every day for the rest of your lives. Whenever you feel like it, you can do something for them. Not so with me. She did what she could when she could-she pre anointed my body for burial. And you can be sure that wherever in the whole world the Gospel is preached, what she just did is going to be talked about admiringly.'* (Mark 14)

'By His own example, Jesus shows us that every person, no matter how powerful or wise he may be, needs love and care. Unlike many Christians, fearful of being 'selfish,' Jesus does not ignore His personal needs or hide them from friends or strangers. In fact, by letting others know what He needs and feels, He makes it possible for them to care for Him.

Parents can do this, You can talk to your children about your highs and lows, blessings and bummers, and pray for each other. Gathering at God's feet to listen to one another is a blessing. We might invite self-giving by asking our children, 'How's your day?' when they're coming home from school or asking a spouse about their work day.

When we give of ourselves by listening and revealing what our own blessings and bummers were that day, we invite understanding.

We can come to Jesus and confess our inadequacies and receive His forgiveness in the body of Christ. We can practice forgiving each other. As you allow Christ to live in you, you develop that self giving agape love kind of attitude a little more. God is absolutely

holy, as we see in our first lesson. This Holy and perfect God calls us to get beyond any hurt feelings and turn enemies into friends. Peter responds in our Gospel text to this holiness in the practical multiplying of fish. He says to Jesus, *"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*

But Jesus doesn't respond to that. He accepts them as they are with all their imperfections, as we are with all ours, He calls us to follow Him. He says to them and to us: *"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch people."* You do that with example, your words and caring *agape* type, self giving love. Some examples could include getting in the car to come to church, coming up for Holy Communion, giving your offerings to God, listening to others and praying for others. It might include a call at home to someone who missed church or who is sick. It might be a visit to someone at the hospital or nursing home. It might include being a Sunday School teacher or serving as an acolyte or lector or in some other worship leadership capacity. What if God calls you to serve on church council? Then, there is the opportunity for community service throughout the week.

We are given so much from God, more than we will ever know. We need to say 'thank you' for every gift from a baby to a beautiful sunrise. We can say thanks for food and material things, home and family, job and income and 'everything I need from day to day.' God does this out of Fatherly kindness and mercy as Luther said.

Sometimes God's love shakes our foundations and calls us to grow closer to Him as Paul says, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13) It is easy to put this message aside for another day until you are tested. You don't know when the test will be, but it will surely come. When the call to love is there, you can say with Isaiah, in our first lesson: "Here am I. Send me." (Is.6) Here I am. Send me to help out in my church. Here I am. Send me to help in worship or serve on altar guild. Here am I. Send me to volunteer at the hospital. Here am I. Send me to help with a friend who is moving. Here am I. Send me to help on a clean-up day at church. Here am I. Send me to do what God calls me to do. Listen closely for His call. Will you do that?

There are three aspects of Jesus' love: self-giving, tending, and truth-seeking. Today, we have looked at one of the three: self-giving. When the call is there, say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me." Amen