

Third Sunday After the Epiphany
January 22, 2016

Gone Fishing!

In the Name of God the Holy Trinity.



This is the very name in which you have dedicated yourselves and this church. You have dedicated and consecrated this place to the strong name of the Trinity.

God

Jesus

The Holy Spirit.

God as our Creator.

Jesus as our Savior.

The Holy Spirit, the Hagia Sophia, she who is our Holy Wisdom from on High. You do know that the word Spirit is “Sophia” in the Greek language and means “Wisdom”. She is a beautiful name and reflects the feminine side of God. Yes, of course you do.

And so you have dedicated yourselves and your church to all that is creative within and among you, all that saves yourselves and others, all that grants us wisdom, the holy wisdom from on high.

It is within the context of this very Holy Name that we begin our ministry together;

In the Name of God; The Most Holy, Undivided and Everlasting Trinity.

Cindy and I thank you for your welcome and are grateful to be in your midst here at Trinity Church. We are grateful for all those who have come before us, whose generosity and dedication have built this place. We thank God for all of them, for all of the Clergy who have dedicated themselves here including Fr. Phil, for all the laity who have given so selflessly to build this holy place. And I thank God for each and every one of you. It now falls to us to continue building up the body of Christ.

So lets get right down to it.

Lets go fishing!



That's how Jesus puts in today's Gospel to Simon Peter and Andrew; to James and John the fishermen. They cast their nets in Galilee as the old hymn sings it. Now, we are to go fishing for people.

Let's go see if we can "catch" some people for God. Each and every one of you, Jesus says; "You, I want you to go fishing for people!" Obviously Jesus wants us to bring the Gospel to the people. So, what do you suppose that means?

Let me put this very simply. The prophet Isaiah says: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

What is this deep darkness?

What is this great light?

It is very simple. You know the darkness of sin. Crime, violence, drugs, hatred, prejudice, oppression, inequality. In short; the darkness of our time is that so many of us live without purpose or hope.

This present darkness in which we live and the great light that has dawned upon us are reflected in the events of the past week. We celebrated Martin Luther King Day, then there was the Inauguration of the President of the United States of America, and following that yesterday there were marches in Washington, DC; Boston and all throughout this great land of ours. It is in the interplay of darkness and light that a divided nation now takes a sober look at the realities in front of us. I will leave it to you to figure out which of these events has to do with the Light and which with the Darkness. God help us!

Similarly, as I look around this church and take a sober look at the work that lies ahead of us, I must confess all I can say is the same thing; God help us!

It is in the context of these realities; the reality of my country, and the one of my church that I look to God for help. That's when Jesus speaks to us through the Scriptures and the Sacraments. Jesus invites us to ministry.

Jesus wants us to bring purpose and hope to the people who are walking through the darkness.

The Gospel proclamation is simple.

“Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.”

In the very heart of today’s Eucharistic prayer we will say the same thing with a slightly different turn of phrase;

“We remember his death,

We proclaim his resurrection,

We await his coming in glory”

That’s it in a nutshell

In our Baptism, we believe that not only has Jesus died, but we have died with him in a death like his, in order that we might rise with him in a resurrection like his.

Throughout our lives we are broken by sin, defeat and by many moments of death like disappointment. But with Jesus at our side and with God in our hearts, and with friends and family around us, we rise again.

It is our experience that no matter how many dreadful moments there are in our lives, we rise again, again and again.

In the darkest days of the Blitz in London, when the Nazis bombed the people, innocent people, unarmed people, Winston Churchill the old English Bulldog stood by their side to say. “When you are going through hell, remember, keep going!”

“Christ has died,

Christ is risen

Christ will come again, and again, and again”.

We never lose hope.

If this is the Gospel what then shall we do about it? This too is pure simplicity;

Love God

Love one another

Love yourself.

Yes I want you to go fishing. Jesus wants you to go fishing.

Do you have any idea of how dark this world is?

Of course you do.

You know how desperate life is for so many.

How dangerous life is when it is not filled with the fullness of God.

This is why you are here.

You are to show the world how much you love God, love one another and above all, love yourself.

Do not forget to love yourself.

Jesus did not say; “Love your neighbor *instead* of yourself”.

He said “Love your neighbor *as* you love yourself”.



If you have ever gone flying you know that the crew teaches us that if there is a loss in cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop down from above. So whose face do you put that mask on first? You or your baby? If you said; “your baby” you are tragically mistaken. You have precious little time in an emergency to save your life first and then your baby’s life. For if you minister to your baby first you may loose both the baby’s life as well as your own. First save your own life and then you will have the wherewithal to save the lives of those around you.

This is how the Gospel works. First, be forgiven. That’s why Jesus died for you. This is the great news of the Gospel. You are forgiven. Now, live as though you are forgiven. This may take a while. It may take a lifetime but as you grow into your forgiveness, at the same time, forgive so that all may know of the power of God and the Gospel of Christ for yourselves well as for others.

Daily we die to sin, daily we rise to new life in Christ. This is how we are to live Baptized lives. You see, in the Gospel context we are the forgiven forgivers. This is the first sign we have hold of eternal life.

By the way, when you go fishing you may sit there hour after hour, day after day, week after week, and you won’t get so much as a nibble. When the warmer weather comes back and I take my evening walk, all the fisherfolk are down by Red Rock Park in Lynn where I live, and there they are hour after hour, day after day. To me, this is utterly *boring*, but not to the fisherfolk. One day I found out why. Suddenly there it was; “Fish on!”. It took three big men to haul this huge codfish in, and what excitement it caused. It was all worthwhile!



“Everybody’s coming over to my place for dinner tonight”, said the fisherman. “Everybody’s coming over to my place for the next week. There is enough fish here to feed everybody as much as they want for days on end!”

This is how it is with the Gospel. It may take days, weeks, months, years before you get a nibble, but when you finally hook one for Jesus, and by that, I mean when you save somebody from the brink of disaster, what joy there is in heaven and on earth. Then we summon everybody to God’s table. There is plenty for us all to eat and we feast on the power of Jesus’s resurrection. This is what makes it all worthwhile!

Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again

Love God
Love one another
Love yourself.

And finally, what does God give you in the Gospel life?
Forgiveness
Eternal life
And joy without measure.

Depression, the pandemic disease of our time is gone. All the darkness is gone now when we take the Gospel into our own lives and when we bring others into the knowledge and love of God and one another.

So now, I want you to go fishing.

Jesus wants you to go fishing.

All the fish in the sea, by the way! The Baptismal Covenant requires of us that we respect the dignity of every human being. All the folk on the planet without regard to race,, class, gender, orientation, or national origin.

This above all rejoices the heart of God. This is eternal life as God would have us live it.

This above all brings joy to all our hearts that you bring yourself and someone else to the knowledge and love of God.

Lets go fishing!



In the Name of God the Most Holy, Undivided and Everlasting Trinity. Amen.

Fr Paul.