

Sermon for Sunday May 1, 2022  
John 21:1-19

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable you O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Bob is a great guy, a do-er kind of guy. He wears a tilly hat, owns a truck, speaks his mind, and his heart is very close to his sleeve. As time goes by I am a little fuzzy about the details but his story still inspires me. What I remember is that one afternoon Bob was out in his truck, when he came across a young woman looking a bit lost and crying. Bob pulled over to check up on her and discovered that the young woman was a very recent immigrant to Canada, and she was in desperate need. So, Bob helped. He helped her find some furniture, so she and her family didn't have to sleep on the floor, and I believe he helped her find a job. Bob could have remained comfortable, but he didn't.

I heard this week on CBC news that a woman from Calgary was getting ready to welcome three women from Ukraine into her home. She has never met these women and she has no idea how long they will be staying with her, but she is committed to taking it as it comes. The Calgary woman could have remained comfortable, but she didn't.

Another woman met a younger woman through church. The younger woman was not well and needed support as she recovered. With great care and respect, the older woman took the young woman under her wing. The older woman made sure that the younger woman's freezer was full of easy to prepare meals and that if she needed a ride or someone to help listen during a medical appointment the older woman was there for her. The older woman could have remained comfortable, but she didn't.

Three people called out of their comfortable day to be the hands and feet of Christ. **It would seem we are not called to live in safe harbours. Rather, we are called to be the person God created us to be.**

Our scripture lesson this morning, reminds us that the disciples had been on an emotional rollercoaster with the events of Good Friday and Easter, no doubt they were at the point of exhaustion. So, what did they do, they went back – back to what they knew best - fishing.

The Sea of Galilee represented a safe harbor for the disciples, it was what they knew. It was what they had done for years before Jesus came and called them to follow him. It was by catching fish that they had made a living. And now that Jesus was gone, they returned to their safe harbor of fishing.

**The problem is – so scripture challenges - we're not called to live in safe harbors. We're called to be the person God created us to be. Not only this but God pursues us - just as Jesus did the disciples at the Sea of Galilee.**

Earlier in the story, Jesus had given a great new vision to Peter, when he called him the rock on which he was going to build the church. But Peter had demonstrated he was anything but a rock when he denied Jesus three times. But Jesus does not give up on Peter, he peruses him and he is given the opportunity to start to be that rock, that Jesus knew he could be. Peter is given a second chance if you will.

And the story tells us that it is not enough for Peter to declare his love for Jesus; no Jesus challenges him to feed the lambs. Peter is given the chance to not only declare his love but to also live that love.

This theme of God pursuing others, with opportunities to start again, to try again, to put love of God into action occurs again and again in scripture.

Do you remember the vertically challenged Zaccheus, dangling out in the tree, who is called to leave his comfy ways and do the right thing. Or the woman at the well who was given the opportunity to try something new, to tell the truth about who she was and become a witness in her community of Jesus way of justice. Perhaps you remember the story of the rich man who is called out of his comfort - let his riches go and focus on care of community. And there was those Fishermen, those fishermen called to leave what they knew and follow.

Like the disciples of old, we like to be comfortable in our safe harbors. We like to retreat into the comfort of what we know and do so well, we are not anxious to be challenged to grow and change. We like to look back instead of looking forward. Peter might have protested, "Let somebody else feed your lambs. I'm good with just saying, 'I love you.'" **But God pursues us and asks us to put our deeds where our creeds are.**

It would seem that our God is one that keeps calling – calling us into the challenge of change. You see - Peter could no longer be comfortable - to ease back into fishing. Jesus had come once again – early in the morning – on the beach and Peter knew the journey he had set out on was not over. He was being given a second or third opportunity to become what Jesus had envisioned for him.

As we journey along the road of faith is it important to remember that we are constantly being pursued by our God. Called by God to move from comfortable to action. We need to work so very hard to stay committed

and to grow, to be as God would have us be. It is not the task of a day, but rather one of all our days. To be faithful is not easy. It is not merely wishing for a better world, it is being ready to work for it every day, to realize with each new day we are being given the gift of opportunity.

At some point we have to let go and try. Maybe you have heard the story of the pitcher in a tight game facing a great hitter, shaking off all the pitches the catcher called for. The catcher became very frustrated and finally approached the mound and said, "I have called on every pitch in the world. What do you want?" to which the pitcher replied, "I just want to hold on to the ball as long as I can." It into this safe space that our God arrives. Peter, if you really love me, Jesus urges, you are going to walk away from the safe harbor of that boat and tend my flock. You can't retreat forever.

To respond to God's calling does not mean that we are always prepared to charge full speed ahead. Many days we feel as Peter and the others did when they retreated back to fishing, like a comfortable favorite chair or pair of well broken-in slippers. We, like the familiar, but if we want the full benefit of this faith of ours, we need to push ourselves to go on. We cannot just say we love; we need to show it by our actions.

Jesus' call to his followers is not to retreat to our safe harbors, our comfort zones, but rather to use the gift of a new day to be about the agenda he has for each of us.

Can you imagine for a moment as Jesus stood by the lake and looked out at Peter and the others fishing - what he must have felt? Those on the boat were the heart of the team he had spent his ministry preparing to go to all the world with the Good News. Tears must have run down his face as he looked at them. He had formed them to be his body. They were

his plan to spread radical love into the world and what was happening?  
They were spending their night fishing.

Had they not heard anything?

Was it to all end here?

If we count the number of persons in the lesson, there were seven disciples of the original twelve fishing. Of course, Judas was gone, but four others had gone their separate way as well. Jesus had to be heartbroken and worried.

As the disciples came near, Jesus asks if they had caught anything. They answered they had not. So, he told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, which they did and were successful. **Then** they saw it was Jesus, and Peter in his excitement, jumped into the sea to get to Jesus, (I love how he got dressed first and then jumped in – don't most folks take off their clothes before jumping in the water?). Jesus had prepared a fire to cook some of the fish for breakfast, and they shared bread and fish together. Then Jesus turns toward the boat and the fishing nets that the disciples had been using. That boat represented a safe harbor for Peter and the others. It had been their life before they met Jesus. And now they were being confronted by Jesus, "Do you love me more than these?" Of course, Peter replied that he did. **Then Jesus answered** all three times, "Then show it." He called Peter to feed the lambs and tend his sheep. He was challenging Peter to be about what Jesus envisioned when he first saw Peter - the potential to be the foundation of the church.

Peter had retreated to what was a safe harbor, and now Jesus was giving him the gift of another opportunity to be faithful. There was still time for Peter to become the fiery preacher of Pentecost, to confront the high

priest, the elders and the scribes as they assembled, to reach out to Cornelius, and to be delivered from prison.

Jesus makes it clear that the opportunity to live love, is not to be taken lightly. There will come a day **when there are no more days**. Jesus says, "But then you grow old. You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you to where you do not wish to go." He is saying to Peter now is your opportunity to get on with the mission I have given you. Take this opportunity. Jesus challenges him by saying, "Follow me." Jesus could have added, "I did not choose the safe way. I marched to Jerusalem, knowing full well the risk in doing so, and I took on the form of a servant, one obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Drop those nets. Leave those boats. Get out of your comfort zone and follow me."

This morning we give thanks for Bob, for the woman in Calgary, the older Church woman and all of us who have moved out of our safe harbors, our comfort zones and who have – done what they could. We give thanks for Peter and for our God who pursues us always and refuses to let us go.

Amen

## Welcome

Good morning, friends and welcome to the worship of God this morning. I want to particularly welcome those who are visiting or who are new to our congregation this morning we hope you feel the warmth of our care. Large print bulletins, hearing assists, announcement sheets and the offering plates and a few orders of worship sheets are at the entrance for those who are looking for those items. (I also want to welcome our partners in Radville this morning and others who are joining us online)

It is good to be back with you – I very much appreciated some time off after Easter to rest and renew. One of the things I did to relax while away was to bake and I baked my first Flapper Pie – according to my boys it was a success. Now Laura is taking some much-deserved time to rest and renew, and I believe she is enjoying designing some flower beds. Again, we both thank you folks for making sure we take care of ourselves.

Just a couple of reminders.

This Wednesday evening, May 4th at 7pm we will have the opportunity to listen to Daniel's story, Daniel is a refugee from Honduras. If you would like to attend this event, we would love it if you would contact the office and let us know you are coming. If you want to join via zoom, we will need you again to contact the office so we can send you the link.

And don't forget the Book and Puzzle sale is coming up May 14 beginning at 8am – 2pm. There are sheets on the tables at the back of the church with details as to when to drop off donations and what kind of donations would be welcome and how to get involved in making the sale a success.

Now speaking of getting involved. Here is a word from the chair of the Board – Terry (Chair Elect of the Board – Michael).