

"Yet, if you say so"

Luke 5:1-11

February 2, 2007

The Apostle Paul has a lot of great lines. One of my favorites is in today's 2nd lesson as he tries to convince the church at Corinth to hold fast to the belief in the resurrection. Paul says: "I hand on to you as of first importance" As of first importance Do we really know what is of first importance in our lives? Do we have our priorities straight? Do we shape our lives on that which is of 'first importance' or do we get caught up in all kinds of activities that we make out to be of 'earth shaking significance when they are really not quite that important.

I really hesitate to share this story but it really seemed to fit so well today. It is the story of a guy named Bob who received a free ticket to the Super Bowl from his company. Unfortunately, when he arrives at the stadium he found that the seat was in the last row in the corner of the stadium - he's closer to the Goodyear blimp than the field.

About halfway through the first quarter, Bob notices an empty seat 10 rows off the field, right on the 50 yard line. He decides to take a chance and he made his way through the stadium and around the security guards to the empty seat.

Pretending to know exactly what he was doing, he sat down and then quietly asked the gentleman sitting next to him, "Excuse me, is anyone sitting here?" The man says no. Bob was very excited to be in such a great seat for the game, but decides to ask the man next to him about the vacant seat, "This is incredible! Who in their right mind would have a seat like this at the Super Bowl and not use it?"

The man replies, "Well, actually, the seat belongs to me, I was supposed to come with my wife, but she passed away. This is the first Super Bowl we haven't been at together since we got married in 1967." "Well, that's really sad. I am sorry for your loss," says Bob, "but still, couldn't you find someone to take the seat? A relative or close friend?"

"No," the man replies, "they're all at the funeral."

What is really of first importance in your life? Do you ever pause in the midst of all of the activities in your life and just remember those things that are of 'first importance' and then reshape your day based on those things that are truly important? I recently heard someone suggest that we should stop 'just talking about these things' and actually do it. He was talking about counting our blessing and he

suggested that we use that language a lot but seldom really do it. His suggestion was to stop at the end of each day - truly pause and even get a paper and pencil and write down a list of the days blessing. I thought it was a great idea but I would add to it by suggesting that each morning we read the list from the day before and then beside that list, write down at least one thing that is of 'first importance' for acting on that day.

For Paul that which was of first importance was a risen Christ around whom his life now revolved. On this day with all of its activities with all of its possibilities will walking with God be of first importance [even over against the Super Bowl? That is really a tough question. If we are Christians, I suspect that all of us will be quick to say that God is important but how that affects our life would be more difficult to identify.

As I ponder these things I find myself thinking about the events that took place on the Sea of Galilee on that day when Jesus told Peter to let down his nets for a catch. Something really remarkable happened that day. I am sure that when we look at that story it would be easy to suggest that it was pretty remarkable that the nets came up so full that the boat began to sink. We might even be quick to note that it is remarkable that a life long fisherman would just leave his nets to follow Jesus. Those are remarkable elements in the story - no question about it. But when I am talking about remarkable - I mean something really and truly remarkable - beyond a boat load of fish or boats and nets abandoned on the shore. What I am talking about is Peter, knowing deep in his fisherman heart how silly the suggestion of Jesus really was, yet he listened and did what Jesus asked him to do.

Imagine how Peter must have felt. He was the professional. He had spent his life leaning how to fish - when to fish - just exactly how to let down the nets. Now, the son of a carpenter, a roving teacher and preacher comes along at the end of a long night of fishing and tells the pros how to do their job. It was one thing to be gracious enough to let Jesus use his boat as a preaching platform. I could imagine that Peter would have really liked to get done with the clean up and go home. But this was too much. There he was - stuck taking the preacher out fishing. Peter does try to tell Jesus very gently that it is a waste of time. But - remarkably - Peter says: "Yet if you say so"

I try to imagine myself in that kind of situation. I know how I struggle when someone has tried to tell me to do my job. I am the professional. But then, the fact of the matter is [if I am going to be totally honest with you] that it does not matter if it is preaching or washing dishes - it doesn't matter if it is a matter of theology or how to shovel snow or mow the lawn - I don't like anyone telling me how to do anything. I suspect that is true for most of us. I suspect that, for most of us, we just don't respond well when someone tells us how to do anything.

Yet, Jesus comes along, right in the middle of our busy days when we have everything planned out, He comes and asks us to do something His way.

Will we be open to listening when we have everything in our lives figured out for ourselves? Will we be open to doing something the way Jesus asks us to do it no matter how silly we might imagine it to be? Too often it seems as though we are hardly willing to listen to each other let alone strain to hear that voice of God that call us.

Peter said "If you say so". And he let down the nets and filled the boat at a time when his own strength and wisdom had gotten him nothing. How hard it is to let go and listen to God. How hard and yet what a miracle we will witness when God's guiding word becomes the word that we follow.

What is really of first importance in our lives? Is it living our lives just the way we want to live them and doing things 'my way'? Or is it walking with a God that fills the boat to capacity and beyond?

AMEN