

Luke 5:1-11

Epiphany 5

February 7, 2010

New Years Eve day, January 31st, 2009. Early morning. Sue and I were in Sudbury Massachusetts where we had spent two and a half days with our son, Matthew's, family. We were on the road, heading west. Snow was predicted for that day all across the New York Thruway, and along Lake Erie from Buffalo to Cleveland. I was in a hurry.

The first leg of that journey from Matt's house is on a state route with speed limits of 45 and stoplights here and there. It was a little after 6 a.m.- it was still dark.

We had been traveling about fifteen minutes when my eyes were fixed on the bright green glow of a stoplight. Sue screamed at me. I hit the brakes and yanked the wheel to the left. For just a second time stopped as I wondered if it was too late. But the tires grabbed and somehow we did not crash into the darkness ahead. The road had turned there about thirty degrees to the left at the intersection. Sue's cry of warning had saved us, changed that day from a day of crash and smash and ambulances and wreckers to a day of safe travel. She got my attention just in time.

If three minutes before that moment she had said to me, "Lynn, slow down," I probably would not have listened. Had she spoken her warning in a calm voice it would have done no good. But she saved us by getting my attention at just the right time.

Jesus had been preaching the word of God to a crowd. In those days before amplifying systems Jesus borrowed Simon's boat, so he would go out on the water to preach. Sound carries over the water. When Jesus finished teaching he asked Simon to go out into the deep and fish. Now Simon was done fishing that day – the nets were washed. Simon said, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."

Simon did not exactly have faith that day. He was willing to obey Jesus' request but he did not have much enthusiasm for it. Maybe coming to church is like that for you sometimes - or forgiving someone who has offended

you - or giving to someone who is poor. You do not much feel like it but you know it is what Jesus wants so you do it anyway. Peter went fishing again.

Suddenly the nets were full, so full that another boat had to be called in to help – so full the boats were in danger of sinking. And this is what Peter did: He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus had Peter's attention. Peter knew he was in the presence of a holy one. Immediately Peter knew he was unworthy of this one.

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

It was not about the fish that day – they left the fish behind. Were the fish sold, or did they rot on the dock, or did the crowd go home with free food that night? Not a word is said. Jesus was fishing for Peter, all those fish were just the lure to get his attention. Peter was hooked. He followed Jesus.

Does Jesus have your attention? Or are you busy trying to get his? Do you come here so he will pay attention to you, listen to your words, give you what you want from him? Or do you come here to pay attention to him – to seek his way for your life? All through Jesus ministry there are people seeking his attention. Many get from him what they need and then they go on their way. Many of you can tell of how Jesus has given you what you need though many of you are not so sure of that in these hard times. Food, health, security – when we have these we can just drive on down the road of life and not give much thought to the curves ahead. But Jesus wants our attention because he has so much more planned for us. People to speak to - people to love - time spent in prayer - learning to let go of stuff and grab hold of love – repentance - turning in a new direction. God's Word comes to us lead us down some brand new roads, to prepare us for hard times ahead, especially to prepare us from that final journey through death.

Does Jesus have our attention? Are we listening? Are we out in the deep waters fishing for the people he wants to fill his boat with?

It was not just Sue that grabbed my attention that morning. God did as well. Time and again I have returned to that moment and given thanks to God. Left to myself I was heading for a crash. But Sue and Jesus got my attention.