

Good morning! This is Sunny Ahn, the Senior Pastor at Kona United Methodist Church. I'm glad that you are still here with us, Week #15 of Online Worship in our quarantined life, to think about your faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Today, we have the Faith Talk #1 according to the Divine Encounter of Jesus' First Disciples—Peter, Andrew, James and John. Before diving into our faith talk, let me share a short story.

**[Story]** A priest, an evangelist, and a minister were in a rowboat in the middle of a pond fishing. None of them had caught anything all evening. Then the evangelist stands up and says, he needs to go to the bathroom. So, he climbs out of the boat and walks on the water to shore. He comes back ten minutes later the same way. Then, the minister decides he needs to go to the bathroom, too. So, he climbs out of the boat and walks on the water to shore. He, too, comes back the same way ten minutes later. The priest looks at both of them and decides that his faith is just as strong as his fishing buddies and that, he can walk on water, too. He stands up and excuses himself. As he steps out of the boat, he makes a big splash down into the water. The evangelist looks at the minister and says, "I suppose we should have told him where the rocks were."

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Faith is not just blindly believing something. Especially, we, the Methodist Christians, believe our God through scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Particularly, we, the people of Kona United Methodist Church, encourage all people who are worshiping with us to put their thinking-cap on to personalize whatever we do in worship to be theirs. I pray that you will experience God today and make your commitment to grow your faith each and every day.

Today we have the story of Jesus, calling His first disciples—Peter, Andrew, James and John on the Sea of Galilee. As we read today's scripture, I had three things in mind:

First, the great revelation comes in a totally unexpected way. Peter, Andrew, James, and John have no idea that their whole lives are about to change. That's usually how God works. We're just going on in life, business as usual, everything

copacetic, doing our thing, and suddenly the Lord intervenes to redirect our steps. Who knew that we would be quarantined and deal with the COVID-19 Pandemic? Who knew that no in-person activity is allowed in church? Who knew we would do online worship and share the Good News of Jesus Christ “glocally”? Globally and locally? Our own experience has been that we cannot predict the intervention of God in advance. As Jesus pointed in John 3:8, the Spirit blows wherever he wishes. We never know when the call will come to “launch out into the deep.”

Second, the great revelation comes in the course of daily obedience. Fishermen fish. That’s what they do. In the first century, that meant going out on the Sea of Galilee at night, casting your nets into the water, fishing all night, and then coming ashore at daybreak. When today’s scripture says that Peter, Andrew, James, and John were cleaning their nets, it means that the long night was over, and they were taking care of the nets so they could go fishing when night came once again.

Teachers teach. Singers sing. Cooks cook. And on it goes for all of us. Where do we begin in discovering the will of God? Here and now today is the place to start in discovering the will of God while we are doing whatever we are doing in our present situation at our best. That’s the beginning. Faith is here and now, not tomorrow.

The way we discover God’s will for the future is to do what we know to be the will of God right now. So many of us live for those high mountain peak experiences, for those emotional moments, for those times when the clouds part and God seems so real to us. Almost as if we could reach out and touch Him. When we say “God, show me your will,” what we mean is, “Lord give me some feeling, some insight, some spiritual revelation.” And God says, “I have already shown you my will. Now, just get up and do it!” You know what you need to do today. So, just do it in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Third, the great revelation comes only after the small step of obedience. Jesus first asked Peter for the use of his boat as a kind of floating pulpit to address the crowds that gathered on the shore. That was fine with Peter who was busy cleaning his nets. It was a small thing, really. But that small step of obedience led to the miracle that changed Peter’s life and others’. You never know when one of those great miracles is around the corner, but they are more likely to come as we travel along the pathway of daily obedience.

Having agreed to let Jesus use his boat as a floating pulpit, Jesus now challenges Peter to a much greater step of faith. “Let down the nets for a catch.” So first we obey in small things, and out of the nitty-gritty of daily obedience, we discover a greater challenge looming before us.

There is an important lesson for us to ponder in all this: When we encounter Jesus, we will never be the same again. No one can meet Jesus and walk away unchanged. We may end up closer to God or we may harden our hearts. But, no one ever meets Jesus and stays the way they were before. In Peter’s case, his confession became part of his testimony. He knew he was a sinner and wasn’t ashamed to admit it. God can use a man who knows his weakness and doesn’t try to hide it.

Several years ago, one of my friends sent me an email containing a one-sentence prayer that changed my life: “***Lord, do things I’m not used to do.***” That prayer is an invitation to the Lord of the universe to enter my little world and shake it up any way He chooses. It’s a way of saying, “Lord, here I am. Here’s my life. I’m asking You-NO, I’m inviting You to come into my world and rearrange anything You like if it will make me more effective for Your Kingdom.”

Let me warn you—and I know this from personal experience—if you ever dare to pray that way, you’d better buckle up because God will take you up on that prayer. He’ll move you from where you are to where He wants you to be. Things may start happening quickly.

That’s always been God’s way. When He wants to shake up the world, first He finds a man or a woman and He begins to shake them up. And when they are shaken up, He uses them to shake up the world around them.

Jesus’ first disciples prove the point. God’s will is always good, but it’s not always comfortable. And it’s certainly not predictable. One day you’re catching fish, the next you’re catching men. One day you’re on the boat, the next you’re following Jesus down some dusty road. One day you’re arguing about where to cast your nets, the next you’re arguing with the Pharisees and defending the Good News of Jesus Christ. One day you’re washing the fish smell out of your robes, the next you’re watching Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter from the dead. That’s what I mean when I say that God’s will can mess up your life in a good way.

For Peter and the other disciples, following Christ meant leaving behind the old life (including the incredible catch of fish), giving up their boats, their nets, and their livelihood, and following Christ into an unknown future. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the well-known theologians, described it this way: “They must burn their boats and plunge into absolute insecurity in order to learn the demand and the gift of Christ.”

Letting go must always come first. Anything that hinders our walk with Christ must go. Even some good things must go in order that better things may come from the Lord. We cannot have it both ways.

The word for “followed” means “to walk the same road.” That’s what a disciple does—he walks the same road as Jesus. He gets on the “Jesus road” and follows it wherever it may lead. No guarantees, no deals, no special promises. He simply walks that road every day, following in his Master’s steps.

Don’t be afraid to follow Jesus. You’ll never regret starting down the “Jesus road.” You’ll only regret that you waited so long to do it. Are you ready to follow Jesus wherever He leads? Would you be willing to say, “Here I am, Lord?” I pray you would. Amen.