

# Preaching from St. Stephen's Pulpit

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, VA

February 16, 2025

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## Fishing Instructions

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Beloved by God, my siblings in Christ; grace to you and peace from God our Creator and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have bemoaned to you before some of the deficiencies of the Revised Common Lectionary. I find myself wishing to do so again this week. You see, I think our text this week is rather closely linked with the text we heard proclaimed from Luke 4 last week. But to understand how they are linked you really need to encounter what we skip over between the calling of the first disciples and this sermon “on the plain.”<sup>1</sup>

Last week we heard the call of Simon, James and John to discipleship. And in that call Jesus told them that “from now on you will be catching people.”<sup>2</sup> Like Jesus preaching from the plains rather than a mountain, this is another difference between Matthew and Luke. In Matthew the disciples are to be “fishers of people” while in Luke they are to be “capturers of people.” Matthew is concerned with maintaining the fishing allegory. Luke isn't. He uses the word for capture instead of fish, a word denoting capturing someone alive and “bringing them in” to use more modern language as opposed to fishing language.<sup>3</sup>

Why does that difference matter? Well, Luke uses “capture” because that's exactly what Jesus has done to Simon, James, and John; and that's exactly what Jesus spends his timing doing in the verses we skipped over between last Sunday and today. After the group leaves the lake shore, and the boats groaning with an overabundance of fish, Jesus leads them into town where he

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<sup>1</sup> While Matthew's version of this sermon takes place on a mountain (Mt. 5:1), in Luke we are told it takes place on a “level place” (Lk. 6:17)

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 5:10e (NRSVUE)

<sup>3</sup> ζωγρέω - From the same as *zoon* and *agreuo*; to take alive (make a prisoner of war), i.e. (figuratively) to capture or ensnare -- take captive, catch. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)

heals a man with a skin disease.<sup>4</sup> After some prayer time,<sup>5</sup> Jesus goes on to heal a paralyzed man while calling out the cruelty of the scribes and pharisees,<sup>6</sup> then he goes and calls a despised tax collector to discipleship while teaching about a new Way, a Way that replace the old ways.<sup>7</sup>

That brings us to Chapter 6 of Luke which begins with two encounters between Jesus and the religious authorities. Jesus uses these encounters to center love and compassion over and against traditions and sabbath rules.<sup>8</sup> Jesus then goes off to pray again<sup>9</sup> before returning and calling the twelve disciples.<sup>10</sup> At which point he settles in to preach an important sermon to the crowds and his new disciples.

Jesus captures his first disciples and brings them into the kingdom (or kin-dom) of God. He then goes on to capture more people for God's kin-dom. How? He meets people where they are and he serves their needs, he works to restore them to wholeness. He centers the love, grace, and compassion of God in his life; all of which prompts him to act in service of others, even when it might get him in trouble.

So Jesus has captured his disciples and warned them that they will become capturers too. But they need to know how! So Jesus shows them! He heals and teaches, he forgives sins and restores people to wholeness, and he even stands up for those being oppressed by the systems of his time. So he has shown them what it means to be a capturer of people. Now he's going to take them deeper into the why of this work.

Why has the Word become flesh? Why has God broken into human reality? Why does Jesus want disciples? Why does he show them how to capture people through loving service and solidarity? Why does he bother to teach and preach? For the sake of the kingdom, the kin-dom of God!

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<sup>4</sup> Lk. 5:12-15 (NRSVUE)

<sup>5</sup> Lk 5:16 (NRSVUE)

<sup>6</sup> Lk. 5:17-26 (NRSVUE)

<sup>7</sup> Lk. 5:27-39 (NRSVUE)

<sup>8</sup> Lk. 6:1-11 (NRSVUE)

<sup>9</sup> Lk. 6:12 (NRSVUE)

<sup>10</sup> Lk. 6:13-16 (NRSVUE)

The Way of Christ leads to a world where the poor are welcomed into the kingdom of God. The Way leads to a world where the hungry are filled and where weeping gives way to laughter. The Way of Christ calls to account those who hoard and overconsume. It calls the powerful to humility and warns that the world will respond to all the Way of Christ with hatred, exclusion, and even revulsion.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus describes the topsy-turvy kingdom, kin-dom of God and then goes back to it's establishment. He's teaching the crowds, but perhaps mostly the disciples, what they're doing when they are capturing people for the kingdom of God. They are blessing people. They are loving people with God's deep and abiding love.

It can't be that simple, can it? Does being "capturers of people" really boil down to that? To love? Yup, that's it! Care for others and the world God made. It's really that simple. You see someone hungry? Feed them! Lonely? Reach out to them! Suffering? Comfort them! Ostracized? Include them!

And that's not just for other humans. We are called to love creation too! I've been amazed at how quickly the four of us have fallen in love with our new kittens! I'm sure you've heard stories of human affection overcoming the fear of abused animals. There have even been reports of creatures like sharks responding positively to affection.<sup>12</sup> Now, I'm not suggesting you go pet a shark; but I am saying that centering God's love in our lives means loving all that God loves...and that's all that God has made...which is, of course, everything.

I spoke last week of the invitation that God extends to us, an invitation to discipleship, an invitation to the Way of Christ. Jesus first invited Simon, James, and John; but he invitation is extended to us too. An invitation to capture people for God's kingdom, God's kin-dom. An invitation to love others with God's love. A love that prioritizes the needs of people and the needs of creation. A love that lifts the lowly, fills the hungry, comforts the weeping. A love that invites us to give up for the sake of others. A love that

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<sup>11</sup> Lk. 6:22 (NRSVUE)

<sup>12</sup> Tonge, P. (1980, September 8). Sharks also thrive on affection. The Christian Science Monitor. <https://www.csmonitor.com/1980/0908/090815.html>

carry us through this life and the next. A love that is always greater than we can imagine. Go...share that love. Bless others. Bless creation. Amen.