

Centre Street Congregational Church, UCC

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Drop Your Nets

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Let us pray . . .

I recently read where scientists now believe that when we're in the rapid eye movement or REM phase of sleep, it may or may not be related to dreaming as originally thought. While it is a deep phase of sleep, it's now thought that during REM, the eyeballs go back and forth repeatedly in order to oxygenate themselves!

I often love surprising changes of perspective or understanding that can be revealed in the depths of seeking. So from the example I

gave, science's pursuit of rapid eye movement led to the discovery of the eye oxygenating itself.

The Bible, as the Living Word of God, also has that ability to give us a surprising change of perspective. Words that tend to get churned around as the same old thing can be revealed in fresh and unexpected ways when we spend *time* with them.

Take for example this morning's lesson that Dwight Jr. read for us. These verses from Luke tend to be familiar with many Christians. This story is frequently understood as Jesus gathering disciples so that they can learn to evangelize or share the good news. Sermons then usually go off from there to talk about what does discipleship look like or what would you leave behind to follow Jesus? Or have you ever changed your life to serve Christ. Stuff like that.

Beginning in March, at 8 a.m., I'm going to offer the first 3 Sunday mornings for an informal deep diving of sacred texts. This offer is way overdue, I know. You can show up in your PJs, sipping coffee if you'd like because it will be on zoom — even when we move back to in-person worship. I'll keep it under an hour so you still have time to get ready for 10 AM worship.

The point of these deep dives is to help the texts bring you to surprising or deeper places. Our 11 PM Christmas Eve online service was similar to what I'll be teaching, where we did a slow reading of the text and then let ourselves be disturbed or interrupted by a certain word or phrase.

Earlier, in our call to worship, we heard Isaiah, Paul, and weary fisherman responding to God interrupting their lives.

- In Isaiah, when God asked, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah told God to send him.
- Paul, who persecuted the church, became an apostle—not so he could brag about it, but so that all might believe in the Gospel.
- And of course in our lesson, Jesus calls the first disciples, telling them to follow him in order to fish for people.

In each case, the Holy interrupts their lives to do something on behalf of God. I think there is something about the Divine that does interrupt us, or get our attention.

I had that "interrupted" experience in preparing for this morning's lesson. In preparation for writing my messages, I always slowly read the lesson, line by line and in that lingering, I leave myself open to being caught by something. Sometimes it's one word, sometimes it's

many verses. Sometimes it takes a few days, but always, something catches me and what caught me for today was verse 4

4 When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

For the past year, I have been rowing out farther and farther into very deep water to do all kinds of interior work with my unconscious self and my deepest beliefs. Turn out it's very busy inside me and I have much untangling to do. Anyway, for the most part it's been quite painful and disorienting, but I have faith that good fruit will eventually be produced.

However, I've been working so hard and continually that it never occurred to me to perhaps "drop my net" to give my soul the same lingering and spaciousness that I do for sermon prep.

Rowing out into deep water is easy for me. Dropping my net? Not being productive? Not so much — that's going to take some time. Maybe I'm addicted to the interior work and afraid to drop my net. Maybe it is possible that not dropping my net keeps me from following Jesus. Maybe my star word — which is "dance" is all about dropping my net.

What if dropping our nets meant we'd find something of God's in return? In this story, it meant proof of God's abundance while also serving as a metaphor for becoming disciples to catch people for God.

What about you? Are you into something perhaps so deeply that you can't put it down either. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus summarizes his teachings by essentially saying that following him means doing as he taught. He taught that we are to

First: love God with all our heart, mind, and soul and

Second: love our neighbor as ourself

So what about you? If you were to drop your net, what would you be laying down and how might that help you follow Jesus?