

The Day Everything Changed

Luke 5:1-11

Introduction

It was the last day of classes for students at Johnson Memorial High School. Tomorrow would be the start of a long-anticipated summer vacation. Most of the students and faculty were looking forward to the break, and anticipated a quiet final day of school. Unfortunately that would not be the case. For four of the students, this would be a day they would never forget – a day where everything changed.

That was the winning submission in an English essay contest several years ago. Students were challenged to write an opening paragraph for a book or short story that would cause the reader to want to read the rest of the story. To the best of my knowledge, the rest of the story was never written, so I have no idea what happened on that day. But it was, according to that author, one of those days where everything changed.

Days like that are pretty frequent. A phone call, a diagnosis, an accident, a proposal, an announcement. You have probably had several of those days in the course of your lives. I know I have.

- My Mom died 47 years ago this past Saturday. Everything changed for my family that day.
- Every June 28th commemorates another life-changing day. That's the day when Karen went from being my girlfriend to also being my wife. (She's still my girlfriend.)
- It was a Valentines Day that I first became a dad. Things change when you become a parent.

One day as Isaiah was worshipping in the Temple, he had this spectacular vision of heaven. He saw these six-winged creatures flying around singing praises to God, and felt the vibrations of the room as their praises filled the air. It caused him to confess his own sinfulness and resulted in a healing act of forgiveness as a burning coal from the altar was pressed on his lips. In a matter of moments, he went from crying "Woe is me!" to exclaiming "Here am I. Send me!" when the call of God went out. That was a day that changed everything.

Peter had one of those days too. He and his fishing business partners had just completed a long and unsuccessful night of fishing. They had everything almost cleaned up when Jesus crawled into Peter's boat in order to put some distance between Himself and the crowd that had come to hear Him preach. When the sermon was done, Jesus (the son of a carpenter) turned to Peter (the professional fisherman) and said, "I've got a great idea. Let's go fishing!"

Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch. (Luke 5:4)

There are a number of reasons this was a bad idea. Anyone who knew anything about fishing would know that. But in a rare moment of self-restraint, Peter – the man best known for his inability to keep his mouth shut – agreed to do it. No doubt tired from a long night of catching nothing ... no doubt irritated that the request came once everything had been cleaned up and put away ... Peter simply responded: "I will do it ... because you say so."

*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But **because you say so**, I will let down the nets. (Luke 5:5)*

And in that moment ... those four little words "because you say so" transformed this otherwise "ordinary" day into a day he would never forget. For Peter this was a day that changed everything.

On that day Peter experienced ...

CHANGE #1: A CHANGE IN PETER'S PERSPECTIVE

Peter had never caught that many fish before. His nets began to break and his boat began to sink under the weight of this astonishing catch. Realizing that he was in the presence of God, Peter's perspective changed, and he offered the only confession that a person can give in a moment like that: "I am a sinful man!"

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8)

It was the same confession offered by Isaiah 700 years prior to Peter's confession:

"Woe to me!" (Isaiah) cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5)

In the presence of God, Peter and Isaiah looked and saw themselves as they truly were: sinful people – the polar opposite of the holy God in whose presence they stood. They had no recourse but to acknowledge that fact and confess their unworthiness.

Theologian John MacArthur writes:

A basic mark of true spirituality is a deep awareness of our sin. In Scripture those who most despised their sinfulness were often those who were the most spiritual. Paul said he was the chief of sinners. Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Isaiah said, "Woe is me, because I am a man of unclean lips." Spiritual people realize they are in a death struggle with sin.

The acknowledgement of our sinfulness allows God's forgiveness to transform us:

Martin Luther once dreamed he was in his house and saw Jesus coming up the walk toward his door. Luther examined his surrounding and realized that everything was an absolute mess. Clothes were thrown over the furniture, old food was sitting out, trash was everywhere. And he thought, "How am I going to let the Lord of Life, Jesus Christ, come in to a mess like this." He hurriedly tried to straighten up but the more he picked up the greater the mess became.

Finally, Jesus knocked at the door. Luther resigned himself to the mess and as he opened the door, he said, "Jesus, come on in, if you think that you can come into a place like..." and as he turned he saw that everything had been put into order, everything in its proper place. The house was immaculate as Christ entered in.

For many people – Christians included – seeing ourselves as sinners before a Holy God is hard to do. We basically think we are good people – at least good enough. We easily justify our attitudes and actions. But the truth is, like Luther, we are a mess until Jesus Christ enters in.

The day we are finally able to acknowledge our sinfulness before our Holy God is a day that everything changes because it is a day we become new:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The day described in today's gospel also brought about ...

CHANGE #2: A CHANGE IN PETER'S PURPOSE

Until that day Peter was a fisherman. He fished for fish. But on this day everything changed. He would go from catching fish in the family business to catching people in the Kingdom of God.

*Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."
(Luke 5:10b)*

Peter's new job was to be a witness so that other people might come to a point of faith like he had. He was to tell them what happened to him. We usually talk about this in terms of the Great Commission:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
(Matthew 28:18-20)*

The supply of such fish is endless.

The famous evangelist Bill Sunday was looking for people to tell about Jesus. Once when he was preparing to hold revival services in a particular city, he wrote a letter to the mayor, asking for the names of people who had a spiritual problem and needed help and prayer. The mayor responded by mailing Billy Sunday the city telephone book.

Every follower of Jesus has that same purpose. The late Sam Shoemaker, an Episcopalian bishop said:

The Lord has called us to be like Peter – fishers of men. We have turned the commission around so that we have become merely keepers of the aquarium.

On this day Peter found a new purpose for his life and he began to follow Jesus full-time. Up until this point he had only done so part-time. We know this wasn't the first time he met Jesus – but on this day the things that had constantly drawn him back away from following were left behind. He was now “all in” on this new purpose for his life.

*They pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything** and followed him. (Luke 5:11)*

The day we hear Christ's call and start fishing for people is a day when everything will change for us.

APPLICATION

You know, it occurs to me that Peter had no expectation he would ever catch anything on that day when Jesus got into his boat. The text says that his fishing partners didn't even go along. When his net started to break and his boat started to sink, he had to call for help. They weren't there.

So why did he do it? Why did he push out into the deep waters with no expectation that this day would be any different than the previous night when he had caught nothing? Four little words:

*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But **because you say so**, I will let down the nets. (Luke 5:5)*

As a result of a simple act of obedience, Peter's life changed dramatically.

There are things to which God calls each one of us: Fishing for people is one of them. And there are some things that are unique to us individually. But He is calling.

In those special moments, He is inviting you to a place where your perspective and your purpose can be transformed into something really special. And you may not understand why or how? His invitation may defy all logic.

- You might already know what that means for you.

- If you don't, I encourage you to pray about it. Ask God to show you.

And when you know ... do it.

Even when it makes no sense, I encourage you to respond as Peter did – with those four little words: Because you say so ... When you do that will be a day that changes everything.

Amen.