

Feb 10, 2019

Luke 5:1-11

Epiphany 4-C

“The Lord of Reassurance”

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Reassurance. We all need some extra reassurance once in a while.

- Parents have a really hard job, and they need some occasional reassurance that they’re doing OK.
- Little children need reassurance all the time: when they’re going to see the doctor, going to a new school, saying goodbye to a grandparent.
- Teenagers need reassurance that everything they read on Snapchat or Instagram is not necessarily true.
- Young adults need reassurance that someday they’re going to be able to move out of their parents’ home.
- Brides often need some reassurance just before they walk down the aisle.
- And grooms need reassurance that nobody’s really looking at them on their wedding day, and it doesn’t matter how their hair or tuxedo looks.
- Football fans need reassurance that someday Tom Brady’s going to check into the nursing home, and the Patriots will stop winning.
- Husbands and wives, no matter how long they’re married, need reassurance that their spouse really understands them.

How many of you could use a little reassurance in some part of your life today? Well, we’re here to help. Today, as you leave, stop by the Extra Reassurance table in the narthex. We have some friendly volunteers who’ll give you 15 seconds of reassurance: a hug, a pat on the back, or a quick prayer.

And this is just for fun, sort of; and sort of not. We all could use 15 seconds of reassurance, couldn't we? So today's your day. Stop by the table on your way out.

Now, I certainly can't guarantee that you're going to find all the reassurance you'll ever need at that table. But what I can do is present to you the One who provides all the reassurance you'll ever need. Jesus Christ is the Lord of reassurance. And when we learn to turn to him, in our shaky moments – when we learn to trust Christ's words, in our insecure situations – we'll find the best reassurance of all.

This is exactly what our friend St. Luke, the physician, was presenting in his well-researched word-picture of Jesus Christ. We've been studying the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel in our sermon series. Today we find Luke urging his readers to find their reassurance, to center their faith, on this all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, divine Savior, Jesus Christ.

In our story, Simon Peter gets an incredible dose of reassurance from the Lord. Now, Simon has met Jesus before. We heard last week Luke's account of how Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law. And the gospels of Matthew and Mark make it clear that Jesus had spoken previously with Simon Peter in his workplace, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Luke tells us the story today of how Jesus performed a miracle to demonstrate his power to Simon Peter. He tells Simon to take his fishing boat out into the deep waters, and let down the nets. Simon is a professional fisherman, and he knows that Jesus is telling him to fish in the wrong place and at the wrong time.

But notice what Simon says. **“Master, we toiled all night long and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”** “At your word, Jesus,” says Simon, “I’ll do what you’re asking me to do.” Simon knows, the science of fishing. He’s an experienced expert. But he goes counter to all his own wisdom and holds on to only one thing, his Lord’s word.

And what happens? Jesus’ word comes true. They haul in an astonishing amount of fish, a miraculous catch! Simon Peter’s overwhelmed. He now realizes that only God could do these things Jesus is doing. And he’s overcome with a sense of shame. **“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”** Simon is unworthy to be in the Lord’s holy presence.

But Jesus reassures him. **“Do not be afraid,”** he says. **“From now on you will be catching men.”** See, Jesus is calling Simon Peter to be one of his apostles, to follow him, to learn from him, and to take on his ministry. He’s reassuring Simon that, when he takes Jesus at his word, what Jesus says will happen.

In all his future work as an apostle, Simon can have absolute confidence. If he does what he did in the boat. If he puts his trust in Jesus’ word. In nothing else! Not himself. Not his intelligence. Not his personality, or his health, or his training, or his church, or his friends. All of that is important, but it’s unreliable. It’s erratic. Jesus shows Simon this amazing miracle, so that Simon can have an unshakeable confidence in his Lord’s word in all his future work as an apostle. And Luke writes down Simon’s Peter’s experience for us so that it may produce the same reassuring effect in us.

See, faith in Jesus’ word is what it’s all about for Christians like us. We don’t have Christ walking into our workplaces, or

doing miracles in our living rooms. But we have the word of Christ. We have the living, powerful, unstoppable word of Christ. Promising us his care and constant presence. Offering forgiveness for shame-filled sinners like Simon and me and you. We have the word of Christ teaching us how to live in our family and community relationships, instructing our attitudes about money, shaping our Christian character. Every day, we have the word of Christ himself warning us about worldly temptations and pitfalls, guiding us on the pathway of godly living, strengthening us in our times of worry and self-doubt.

Like Simon Peter, we need to learn to trust this word of Christ above all else. My sinful human nature may pull me this way. The world out there may tug me that way. My friends may influence me in that direction. But if my Lord Jesus Christ tells me that I need to go that way, I need to listen. I need to follow. I need to go counter to all my own experience and reason, forget all the world may say, and to hold to only one thing, my Lord's word.

Put your faith, and live your life, by this word of Christ. For there is no greater reassurance anywhere, is there? Faith in the word of Jesus overcomes the world, the faith that conquers by the word and by nothing but the word.

We all need some extra reassurance once in a while, don't we? Take the Lord of reassurance at his word today, and every day. Amen.