

# THE GOSPEL OUTSIDE - THE SEA OF GALILEE

## Lent

Mark 1:16-20

A Sermon Preached by  
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Seattle, Washington 98125  
March 4, 2018

Scripture – Read by Liturgists  
Listen for the word of God.

### **Mark 1:16-20<sup>1</sup>**

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

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### Pastor Catherine Foote

Will you join me in prayer.

God,  
May the words of my mouth  
And the meditations of our hearts  
Be gathered in Your gentle care  
And find a place in Your heart and in ours.  
- Amen

Tonight is the Oscars. Some of you might be going to Oscar parties. Some of you might be going home to watch the Oscars. Some of you may have made a point of watching every movie in preparation for tonight. And some of you might not care.

But I am one of those who likes to see the Oscar films before the awards are announced. So this week the film I saw was the movie "The Post." Now, I will say that *I\*love* that movie. But it turned out that in our little community theater, the Clyde, in Langley, Washington, where we all gather as if we were gathering in church with our assigned seats in the theater. If we show up and someone is in our seat, we look at them sternly, and then take the pew in front of them. That's the nature of the movie theater on my island.

But I didn't realize it, that an 11-year-old friend of mine, one of the kids who helped raise the puppies we had a couple years back, was in the theater as well. When the movie was all over she saw me, and I asked, "What did you think of the movie [The Post]?" Now this is the story of the Pentagon papers

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Old Testament. ©1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. .

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and how they were published first in 1971 in the New York Times and then the Washington Post. She said, "I didn't get it. ... But I liked the opportunity to eat candy."

I lived through those days, as many of us here did. I understood that movie deeply. What I loved was to hear the story retold by a master storyteller, Steven Spielberg, right? He's not real careful all the time with the facts, but he gets the story. So, for those of you who haven't seen the movie yet, there might be a spoiler alert. Close your ears. Close your ears if you don't want to hear that the Pentagon papers got published.

Steven Spielberg tells the story this way. The Washington Post was a local paper without much regard or national influence. In fact they were struggling as a paper to survive and were stepping into a public offering. They were going onto the Stock Exchange. It was crucial that their stock price stay high.

The New York Times, *the* national paper, had scooped. They had gained access to a national report on the war in Vietnam that implicated every Administration all the way back to Truman. They published a portion of those top secret papers in a national scoop. Quickly the Nixon administration moved to put an injunction on any further publication. So the Courts have said, "New York Times, you can't publish these papers." And suddenly the First Amendment was at battle with the wishes of the judiciary and the administration.

Now into that drama, The Washington Post gets access to the Pentagon papers. And they have to make a decision: should we publish or not? As Steven Spielberg tells it, Katherine Graham, the new owner of the Washington Post since the death of her husband, is the one who makes the final call. But she is torn. She has been kind of dismissed as "just the wife who got the job. We're not sure she can do it. We don't have a lot of confidence in her. \*And she is personal friends with some of the people who will be hurt by the publication of these papers." Plus we bring in the lawyers who say, "Don't publish. You could go to jail."

As Steven Spielberg tells the story, it comes down to midnight when the call has to be made: should we publish or not? And the lawyers are saying, "Don't risk it." And Ben Bradley and the reporters are saying, "We \*must publish." And Katherine Graham stands there to make her choice. The Press Room is waiting to push the button. We only have minutes before we get the newspaper printed and to the distributors and out to the street. We have old phones that you dial like this [circular motion]. - No wonder the 11-year-old didn't get it. - But what a dramatic moment!

The whole theater, we were on the edges of our seats! Spielberg is such a good story. And at the last possible moment, Katherine Graham ... deep breath and said, "Let's publish. Let's go." The theater erupted in applause! Right? Because we feel that moment.

If you dig very deeply into the story of the Pentagon Papers, you will find that Katherine Graham had actually begun to find her voice a little sooner than that, but it was still a moment of crisis. As the movie ends and everybody is wiping their brow and saying "Thank goodness that moment of crisis is over," Steven Spielberg slips in a little hint of burglars breaking into the Democratic National Headquarters at the Hotel Watergate. And we all laughed. ... We all laughed. We know that Catherine Graham's moment had not come and gone. Her journey had just begun.

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Master storyteller Mark takes us to the Sea of Galilee to one moment with Jesus walking by and looking into the eyes of fishermen and saying, "Follow me." One moment. These fishermen, outside, manual laborers, facing storm and cold and backbreaking work that risks their lives, these unskilled laborers at the bottom of the labor pool, working at what their father and probably their fathers before them and their fathers even before them did. Out fishing. Many nets, the tedium, the fear, the danger. ... And in one moment, Jesus walks up and says, "Follow me. We're going fishing for people."

Frederick Buechner has probably said one of the most famous things you could hear about call. Frederick Buechner is a Disciples of Christ preacher. He says, The Call of God is where deep joy meets the world's deep need.<sup>2</sup> What brings you the deepest joy? Where do you see the world's deepest needs? When you can bring those two circles together in a way the overlaps, you will hear your Call. "Follow me," Jesus says. "We're going fishing for people."

I love Frederick Buechner's definition of Call. It speaks to my soul and it's how I've approached my life for a long time. But I would suggest today that Buechner doesn't say *all* there is to say about Call. I'm not sure those disciples on the seashore saw fishing as their deepest joy and, even if they did, what the heck does it mean to be fishing for men? This "fishing for people" - did they get it?

Let me suggest something else. It's interesting to me - maybe just to me - that the images of God and God's work with God's people, the most common image used in Scripture is the image of shepherd and sheep. But the second most common image is of fishermen and fish. When Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee, he was not the first to suggest that fishing for people was the work of God. Actually Amos, the prophet, had suggested that God is a fisherman, that God is the kind of fisherman that throws in the hook and catches those fish that *do not* belong, that invasive species, those fish who have been practicing injustice and violence among the people. He hooks those fish and drags them away. "Hooked," says Amos. "You will be dragged away with hooks. And with fish hooks you will be caught and taken off."<sup>3</sup> ... The Disciples knew what Amos had said.

In the Book of Ezekiel, that prophet compares God to a fisherman. And the prophet Ezekiel says, "You have been scattered to all the corners of the world because of the unjust ways you have lived in this world. God, the fisherman, is going to come and, like a fisherman, catch you all in a net and bring you home."<sup>4</sup>

And John and Andrew and Peter and James knew *that* story, too. When Jesus said, "Come and I'll make you fish for people." Those fisherman *knew* he was inviting them on a journey with God that would be a journey of risk and a journey of justice. The theologian Ted Meyers translates this text this way (and I love it). "Come with me. We're going after the big fish." "We're going after the big fish."

You know, we love to make Call all about the individual. And I think it is. I mean there certainly is a sense in my life - and I hope in yours - that God has called me to something that matters, that makes a difference in the world.

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<sup>2</sup> "The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger coincide." *Wishful Thinking* (1973), p. 95. Accessed 3/29/2018 at [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Frederick\\_Buechner](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Frederick_Buechner).

<sup>3</sup> Op Cit, Old Testament, Amos 4:2.

<sup>4</sup> Op Cit, Old Testament, Ezekiel 11:14-21.

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But I would like to point out that God called community, too. And God has called *this* community. So, let me offer this definition of Call from Parker Palmer to lay alongside Frederick Buechner's deepest joy and greatest need. Parker Palmer says, "A Call is something I can't not do" - something I can't not do - "for reasons I am unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself, but that are nonetheless compelling."\*\*

"A Call is something I can't not do."

When homeless people on the street came to this congregation and said, "We have community. We've built it. We've called it Nicklesville. But we have no place to stay. Can we come?"

I would like to suggest that the congregation did not say, "Hmm. Does our deepest joy meet that deepest need?" We said, "We can't not do this. We don't understand all the reasons. We may not be able to articulate it. It might not even make sense. We could face fines. We don't know what's ahead, but we can't not do this. We know we are Called."

Palmer says it another way that I love: "Find God's fingerprints in your life."\*\* - Find God's fingerprints in this congregation, then we can ask ourselves when it comes into our face, "Is this something we can't not do?" Is this something we *must* do even though we don't understand necessarily everywhere it will lead?

Our anthem this morning, the words you listened to. That anthem was originally written as a requiem written for souls that were lost in a tsunami, where Southeast Asia basically was devastated, one of the greatest natural disasters we know of.<sup>5</sup> And when we hear of such need, what will we do but respond?

When we listen to God's Call, we have to ask ourselves not only "Where is my deep joy?" but also "Where is this world's need so clear and obvious to me that I feel God's fingerprints right there and right here." And in this congregation, when we hear that need, what is it that we can't not do?

I love that picture of *The Post* and Katherine Graham standing by herself and deciding, "We must do this." It's a moment that Steven Spielberg likes to turn into a great story.

Jesus standing on the Sea of Galilee saying, "Follow me. I will help you fish for people."

It's a moment. It's a Call. The Call goes on and it's not just you and you and you. It's to *us*, as well. So instead of talking to the director of *The Post*, let's talk to the producer of *The Post*. Amy Pascal said that when she heard that story it spoke to her because it is the story of a woman finding her voice *and* of an entire country finding its voice. Call comes to you and to me, and to *us*. Call is an invitation to find our voice and in the finding give that voice to others.

Jesus says, "Come follow me. We're going after the *big* fish." - Amen.

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Transcribed by Beth Bartholomew from [www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2018/03/22/2018](http://www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2018/03/22/2018)

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<sup>5</sup> "Requiem" by Eliza Gilkyson on album *Paradise Hotel*, 2005.