

## Homily for Thursday in the Thirteenth Week after Pentecost September 3, 2020

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

*Year 2, Proper 17: 1 Corinthians 3:18–23; Psalm 62:1–6; Luke 5:1–11*

Luke the evangelist reorders the sequence of events that he takes from Mark at the beginning of his gospel. In Mark, after Jesus' baptism and temptation and the arrest of John, Jesus goes to Galilee and preaches "the gospel of God."<sup>1</sup> By the Sea of Galilee, he sees brothers Simon and Andrew. Mark writes, "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishes of men and women.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him."<sup>2</sup> After also calling brothers James and John to follow him, Jesus and his disciples go to Capernaum. There Jesus performs his first act of power: casting out an unclean spirit. He goes from the synagogue to Simon's house and heals first Simon's mother-in-law. Then those who were sick or possessed by demons go to Simon's house and are made whole.<sup>3</sup>

Luke has his own purpose in putting the healing of Simon's mother-in-law the evening before Jesus calls

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:14.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:17–18.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:29–34.

Simon to follow him. The next morning, crowds follow him. Jesus sees two boats, one belonging to Simon. He gets into Simon's boat, sits, and preaches to the crowd on the shore. When he finishes his words to the crowds, Jesus says, using the command form of the verbs, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."<sup>4</sup> When Simon sees the nets filling with fish, he engages in an act of worship with his body,<sup>5</sup> falling to his knees, and says to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O God."<sup>6</sup>

Raymond Brown in his *An Introduction to the New Testament* writes, "The call of a Simon who confesses himself an unworthy sinner is a dramatic presentation of vocation and prepares the way for a calling of Paul who was also unworthy because he had persecuted Christians."<sup>7</sup>

Luke Timothy Johnson in his commentary on Luke reminds us of Mary's confusion when the angel

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 5:4.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> On the translation of *kyrie* in Luke, see C. Kavin Rowe, "Luke and the Trinity: An Essay in Ecclesial Biblical Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003), 1–26.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 238.

Gabriel tells her she will bear a son and hears him say, “For with God nothing will be impossible.”<sup>8</sup>

Ulrich Luz in his commentary on Luke writes, “Jesus is the first fisher of people; his catch is immense.”<sup>9</sup> He also, shall we say, quips, “The glance of the Lord organizes the church; the glance of the believer launches a confession.”<sup>10</sup>

I’m still thinking about words from historian Diarmaid MacCulloch that I quoted in my homily on Monday for the commemoration Aidan, the seventh-century monk and missionary bishop of Lindisfarne, an island off the coast of England, not far from the border with Scotland. He wrote of Aidan and missionaries in England at that time, “[They] talked to [people] of love and forgiveness shaping the purposes of God.”<sup>11</sup>

One favorite chapter in Luke for me is chapter 15, the stories of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. The sheep is found; there is joy in heaven. The coin is found; there is joy before the angels. The younger son

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 1:37.

<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), 171.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>11</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2010), 343–44.

returns to his father and there is celebration. The story ends with the us not knowing whether the elder son will take the place already prepared for him at his Father's banquet.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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