

Sermon – “The Net”
Transfiguration Sunday, 02/27/2022
Olivet Congregational Church, UCC
Reverend Lisa Eleck

Luke 9: 28-43

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.’ ⁴¹Jesus answered, ‘You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.’ ⁴²While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

Sermon: "The Net"

We all have those cherished items from our past. Not exactly souvenirs, but things that hold special memories. You know what I mean. Right? Those things that take us back in time – to when life was different. Maybe life was simpler, yes, in some ways life was simpler when I was Simon, the fisherman, that it is now as Peter. This net brings back those memories – of that simpler time. I would go out in my boat, sit and wait, for this net to fill with fish. Oh, it didn't happen instantly. Sometimes it took all day. We would sit in the boat, it bobbing up and down in the water. Sometimes this net barely collected enough fish to feed us. But it was simpler then, back when I was fishing and mending this net.

But then, Jesus came into the picture, into my life. When he saw me, he changed my name to Peter. He had a lot of nerve, doing that. But I let him. From the moment I met him, there was just something about Jesus. Something inside me made me give up this net...

And today, I was up on that mountain with him. We were there with Jesus - me, James and John. We went up with Jesus, expecting him to want to pray. He did that, you know. He would go off by himself to pray. He needed to pray. It's like he needed alone time to pray. But today he invited us along. Now, I would love to say that I watched him and was able to pray like he did, but, well it's not true. Jesus has this way, this way about him, the way he prays....

Well anyway, I was having trouble staying awake when all of a sudden, there was Jesus. His face was different, it changed somehow. And his

clothes had become all white, so bright, it was hard to look at him. It was astonishing. And then, if that wasn't enough, he was talking with Moses and Elijah. It was unbelievable. I have never seen anything quite like it. I was amazed. You would have been too.

I was so caught off guard that I said something stupid. Well it didn't seem stupid at the time. It was, well you know, it was one of those times when you have to say something but you're not sure what to say. So you say the first thing that comes out of your mouth. That's what I did. I offered to make a dwelling places for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Can you imagine that? How ridiculous. To think that Moses and Elijah would be held to earth. That's absurd. But they were with Jesus. Can you believe it? They were talking like old friends, like it was the most ordinary thing on earth.

But then, we were overshadowed by a cloud. It reminded me of the story of Moses going into the cloud to talk to Yahweh. I had no idea what to expect. But it felt terrifying.

Then was in the midst of this amazing moment, that Voice rang out. " 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'" It didn't come from Moses, Elijah or Jesus. But it filled the sky. I mean it filled the... I don't know what it filled. All I know is that it scared the daylights out of me.

Next thing I knew, Jesus was standing there. Moses, Elijah and the cloud were gone. Jesus was ready to go back down the mountain. He looked ordinary. Like a normal person. Yet I saw it, I saw him aglow and talking with Moses and Elijah. And I heard the voice. Was it God? I think it was God. Calling Jesus his Son, his Chosen One. And telling John, James and I to listen to him.

Listen to him.

Life is not so simple now. Moses, Elijah, and the voice of God saying listen to Jesus.

My life is so different now.

My net is filled with Jesus words. Like the ones from when he came down the mountain, when he talked about who was blessed - the poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those who are persecuted for following him; when he said to love our enemies, to forgive and not judge. He even healed the servant of the Centurion – one of our enemies. How's that for upsetting the status quo. And he sent us out to into the world, to heal like he has been doing for all sorts of people and to share the good news. Or when he told me and his other close friends to feed the crowd, when all we had was a five loaves of bread and two fish. And after he blessed that little food, we shared it and there were leftovers.

His words were unbelievable? And yet, when we listened to him, there was enough. When we let go of our notions that we weren't enough, and listened to him. Something miraculous happened.

Miracles happen again and again when Jesus is around. The sick are healed, withered hands become strong, the paralyzed walk, demons are cast out, a widow's son who had died was made well, and sinners and tax collectors are welcomed. Then, today, Jesus was aglow talking with Moses and Elijah.

The voice said "listen to him."

Coming down that mountain, no one said anything. What were we to say? Who would have believed us? What happened was amazing, surreal. Yet, I am still processing what it all means.

The voice, God's voice, said listen to him.

I will try, I will try to listen to Jesus. I want to follow him, to learn from him, to do as he does, to listen to him. I don't know exactly what that will mean for my life. But I imagine my net will be filled with memories of what it means. I don't know exactly what I will do. But I don't imagine it means I should build dwellings. I don't imagine that I should try to confine Jesus to any place or even time. Somehow, I don't think I can confine Jesus... No I can't confine Jesus. And I can't hold onto him and keep him in some dwelling. Jesus is bigger than any dwelling.

I don't exactly understand all of this. I am not even sure I was meant to have all the answers.

But I do know there is something special about Jesus, and not just because of the miracle I saw today. I know, I said he was the Messiah. But I'm not sure I truly understood what I was saying but I think I am starting to understand better. Maybe it's the way he reaches out to all people. Yes, it's the way he reaches out – to strangers, the sick, the outcasts, even our enemies. It's like he is catching them in his net. It's like he is catching them in his goodness, in his love. And he told me/us, that I/we were to fish for people. Not in a net like this, but in the way I live my life and the way I share the love of Jesus with those who are struggling, who are hurting, who society shuns. Everyone.

I let go of this net to follow him, to be part of the love that goes out from him. You see, I know that Jesus loves me. Despite all the stupid things I say and do, Jesus loves me. I don't need this net to hold onto that.

Thought for the Week

Ash Wednesday is this Wednesday. As we approach the Lent, I invite you to consider how Jesus has touched your life and reflect upon how he has been with you in the mountains and the valleys of your life's

journey. And I invite you to consider how you wish to continue your journey as a follower of Jesus, with him at your side.

Lenten Blessings,

Pastor Lisa