

Discipleship Moment

Luke 5:1-11

When Sara and I first became parents, we had prepared for months. Reading articles and books; researching the best methods of sleep, swaddling, nursing, medicine, baby-proofing our home, the whole thing. Then (and I'm sure those who are recent first-time parents know this feeling) as soon as we brought Augusten home, everyone had an opinion about what we were doing. "You shouldn't let him sleep in *that* bassinet, studies have said its very dangerous," and "a crib of that kind of wood is shown to be more dangerous," and "you need to be feeding him formula, he's not fat enough," or "he's outside too much," or "he's not outside enough," "Where are his socks, he's going to get cold!" etc.

When you have a child, you are inundated with unsolicited advice. And this is always annoying, when someone who doesn't know you or isn't an expert gives you advice. This is exactly what Peter experienced: a teacher (whom he respected a great deal) gave him, a *professional fisherman*, unsolicited fishing advice. Peter, as Pastor Ben taught us, sacrificed his pride, and listened to Jesus. The catch they caught that morning was beyond what they could have imagined, beyond logic, beyond skill. It was supernatural.

In the 21st Century, with a heightened awareness of systemic racism, sexism, and classism in our culture, it is easy for us to begin to look down on those in the past. Especially when it comes to something like the Scriptures. When we read the Bible, we are reading a collection of stories, biographies, genealogies, poems, songs, and oracles that span nearly 1,500 years: and some of these poems and stories are nearly 3,500 years old (or older!).

How can Scriptures that old possibly hold wisdom for today? We have people from all sorts of political, religious, and ideological groups who have differing opinions: some suggest it is a divine rule book, dropped down from heaven; others suggest it is simply human words, and has no authority; some claim it is racist, and sexist, and shouldn't be read. The problem with all of these views is that they impose 21st Century, human categories onto a collection of stories, poems, biographies, histories, and oracles that were gathered over millennia. We simply can't treat the Bible like a textbook. It uses metaphor, hyperbole, epic, and imagery in ways that textbooks in our classrooms don't. But it is not simply literature (although it is literature), because it claims that it is from God throughout the texts. It is not a rulebook, rules and behavioral direction only make up about 20% of the Scriptures: although it does have rules, the Bible *is not* a rule book, the Bible *is not* simply literature, and the Bible *is not* a textbook of scientific, anthropological, and sociological facts.

As we read through the Scriptures, it is easy to impose our own expectations on it. We want it to be a rulebook, or a mythology, or a hate book, etc., but to do this to the text is a form of arrogance. Do we really think we are smarter than the Biblical authors? They didn't rot their brains on television, cable news, and social media. Many of the Biblical authors would have had large swaths of early Biblical stories, psalms, prophecies, etc. memorized. The Bible reflects a literary sophistication that outshines every modern writer (from Shakespeare to now). C.S. Lewis calls this kind of arrogance Chronological Snobbery: "Well, they didn't have the scientific discoveries we have," or "Well, they may have written this in that ancient Israelite context, but they obviously meant that we should vote for Republicans (or Democrats)," etc., etc.

This is treating the Bible like its stupid. This is treating the authors, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and inspired to write these texts as stupid. And it just isn't true. There are lots of bad things in the Bible, but just because something is in the Bible, does not mean the Scriptures support or encourage that behavior (for example, polygamy is *in* Scripture, and even some heroes of Scripture practice polygamy. But if you read the texts honestly, *polygamy never actually brings health or goodness to a situation*, the Bible does not support polygamy). The Biblical authors are way more nuanced than we give them credit for.

It takes a lot of discipline to admit you're not the smartest person to ever live. But, if we sacrifice that pride and arrogance, we can experience the transformative power of *listening*. Listening to God, listening to our neighbors, listening to those who are suffering. And, by listening, we can learn and grow, and become healthier, more mature Christian people. Commit yourself to a life time of *listening* to the Bible. *Don't make assumptions, let it speak on its own terms, and trust that God is speaking to you through it.*

Let us put away pride, and listen to God with joy!

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once

1. When is the last time you read the Bible? When you did read it, was it one or two inspiring verses? When is the last time you read a whole book of the Bible in one or two sittings? How might that change the way you read the Bible?
2. Why is it important to read the Bible? Read or listen to 2 Timothy (its a short letter). What does Paul say about the Scriptures?
3. What do you think it means that Scripture is "God-breathed"? Other translations might say "inspired," or "given by God." What does this mean?
4. Write down or think about the ways that Scripture has played an important part in your life. How has the Bible shaped your spiritual journey?
5. Read Psalm 1. What Does Psalm 1 say about a person who reads (or listens) to Scripture ("the Law") often? What would it look like for you to be that kind of person?
6. If you are not currently regularly reading Scripture, go to <https://www.mybibleplans.com> and create a Bible reading plan. Pick a few books of the Bible you would like to read (or listen to!), and begin reading (or listening)!