

This story that we have in the gospel reading for today is one that makes me smile because I feel like I know exactly what Simon is thinking here in this moment. I have had days like this fishing with my dad when I was young. Days where I've been out for hours and hours and there's just nothing. And we tried everything, going slower going faster, going so shallow we can see bottom, and then heading back to deeper waters hoping that will change something. Changing lures, putting on fresh bait, saying prayers, letting the other guy move the boat hoping maybe he can find the fish, switching hats because you're pretty sure you might be wearing the unlucky one. After trying everything, thinking logically, thinking illogically, trying the spiritual, resorting to the downright ridiculous, you finally must call it a day. 6 hours of nothing, pffft, I'm done. The wind is wrong, the waters cold, the sun's too bright, whatever the reason is they're not biting. And we head back to the dock empty handed. Skunked! And I picture this guy standing on the boat launch as we get back, and he points out to where I just was, and says, "Did you try over there?" Yah, yah I did. In fact, I went over that spot 7 times at different speeds, with different lures, at different depths. I did the same thing over there, and there, and way out there, I have been here for six hours trying everything I possibly could. I'm not an expert fisherman but right now you could go ahead and call me today's expert on over there, and in my expert opinion there are no fish over there.

And here's Simon, an actual expert fisherman, a guy whose been doing this since he was strong enough to pull in a net, and he and his fishing partners, who own a successful fishing business, who literally do this for a living, have been out all night and caught nothing. "Master we've toiled all night and caught nothing." The experts say, "there's no fish over there!"

Experts said that it was a bad idea for churches to be open during the pandemic. That they were a dangerous gathering of people and was a certain way to spread disease and panic. Even now, experts agree that indoor gatherings with people not of your household are dangerous things – this is what brings the cold season and flu season and covid season around. The experts all agree my friends it is dangerous for you to be here.

And I know that my sermon today is going to tread the line for a lot of us, I know that it's going to make many of us uncomfortable, but the time has come for us to answer the question, is what Jesus says more important than what the experts say? And I'm not bringing this up today because I have an axe to grind over the how the government handled the coronavirus pandemic in 2019 and 2020. What we're talking about is written all over our text. Jesus says, put out into deeper water and let down your nets. The experts say “Lord we have toiled all night and caught nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets.” Though the experts say different, because you say so I will.” And they catch so many fish they almost sink two boats.

And then after that Jesus says to them “Come follow me.” Experts say that's a bad idea. They are sitting there with two boats so full of fish that the boats are sinking. This fish could mean enough money to feed them for the next six months. This is their livelihood. This is how they make money. They have multiple boats, and employees, they have an above average income, experts say leaving that behind is a bad idea. But read the text, they left everything and followed him. If you keep reading, right after this passage they come across a leper. Experts say, stay away, it's not safe. In fact, it's illegal to touch a leper and if you did there's a mandatory

quarantine and a ritual of purification. Experts say Jesus puts his disciples in harms way.

You keep reading in your bible and you will find that experts say that Jesus is not the Messiah. John Chapter 7 the pharisees send men to arrest Jesus and they come back empty handed, saying we couldn't arrest him, we've never heard anyone speak like him and the pharisees look at them and say "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the pharisees believed in him? No." 100% of experts agree Jesus is not the Messiah. We can't even get 100% of experts to agree on toothpaste. I'm brushing my teeth with stuff that only 4 out of 5 dentists approve. But here you have it all the experts agree Jesus is not the Messiah.

So eventually those experts caught up to him, eventually they did arrest him, and then they beat him, mocked him, nailed him to a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem for all to see so that every single person might know this one truth that all the experts agreed on, that following Jesus is bad for your health.

The experts were right, only one of those faithful disciples lived to old age. The rest died proclaiming Jesus as savior after the experts told them not to. And it isn't even surprising, after all Jesus did say following him would be bad for your health. Luke 14 he tells us that we follow him at our own risk, following him involves taking up our cross, following him involves risking our own lives and we had better sit down and count the cost before going after him. It's a dangerous thing.

And my friends I say all this today because I want you to know that today our savior calls his disciples to follow Him, and he does not call them to a life of safety. He does not call them to live a life where safety is a priority. They went without food, without water, they almost drown in the lake, they were nearly punched bags for demons, they constantly encountered people infected with diseases, they were

mocked they were beaten, they were eventually killed, experts say this was a dangerous way to live.

And right here today I tell you Jesus calls us to be fishers of men, he calls us to catch people, he calls us to follow him, and you need to know, the experts say this is a bad idea. There are actual dangers in this world right now. You might try to share the gospel with someone who has a disease. They might give it to you. You just might come to church and get infected with the latest flu virus. Singing might be dangerous, communion could be risky, shaking someone’s hand could just be the death of you.

There’s no way around the fact that most things we do involve some risky behavior. I don’t know what danger I will encounter tomorrow. What I do know is that Jesus had called me to catch people, and this church had called me to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. And the experts agree, all those things are dangerous. Just like it was dangerous for you to come here. It’s risky to drive that car, walk across that lot, touch that door, shake that hand, sing that song, take and eat, take and drink. None of it is safe.

Maybe today we should look at this text and look at our world and realize that following Jesus does not mean safety, it means salvation. I’m not saying we should be foolish, I’m not saying we should run into traffic yelling “I trust Jesus” and I’m not saying we should knowingly put ourselves or others in danger. I am saying that life itself is a risk, I am saying that the experts agree that 100% of people who breathe oxygen die, I am saying that there is no way to be safe, but there is one way to be saved.

And that’s why these disciples follow him. They don’t seek a safe life; they seek one who will save their lives. This one who can make fish appear from nowhere will

“Not safe, but Saved” Luke 5:1-11 Exaudi Domine 2025

feed them. Not with perishable food but with bread from heaven that endures to eternal life. This one who commands wind and waves, will protect them from danger. This one who drives out demons will protect them from evil. This one who raises Lazarus, this one who comes back from death itself will give life to their mortal bodies. Even though they die yet shall they live. And every one of them lived what we can only call a life that was unsafe and at the end of all things we will see every one of them because though Jesus is not safe, Jesus absolutely saves.

And so today you and I my friends follow Jesus. Down a path that reaches out to our neighbors, down a path that will bring us into contact with the sick, the sinner, and yes even death itself. And all the while we will know, we will be assured, that sickness will not be our end, sin will not be our master, and death will not be our destination. We are here today my friends, and the experts all say it is not safe, but Jesus says we are saved. Let us follow him. Amen.