Going Deeper
Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 5:1-11

Several years ago, two land surveyors were sent from a large city in Wales to survey the mountains in North Wales. They stayed for a week at an isolated shepherd's cottage. During the day they climbed the steep slopes, charting the contours, checking the landmarks, and tracing the mountain streams to their **sources. Each night they returned** to the cottage. Near the end of the week, just before retiring for the night, the old shepherd suggested he might accompany them on the mountain the next day. "There's no need," the confident men of the city replied. **"We can't possibly get lost. We have** our compass, our charts and the maps." "I'd better come with you," the old shepherd insisted. "There's really no need," they replied again. "The map will bring us home." "But," the old man **persisted, "I know the mountain tracks like the back of my** hand. I know where the steep precipices are. I know where the bog runs deep. I know where the bracken covers the crevices." "It's all on the map," repeated the city men. "The map will **bring us home." The old man was quiet** for a moment and then spoke once more: "You may have the map, but the fog isn't on the map."[1]

These men trusted their **skills, their abilities, and the resources in** their hand more than the wisdom of the one who had walked the mountain daily. Although the shepherd was saying to **them you need me, they were constantly** saying "No we don't, until the Shepherd pointed out that skills, abilities and the resources they had in hand would be useless when their path was no longer clear. The unexpected was in the mountains and **unless they had the Shepherd with them** their maps and gadgets would be useless and they would find themselves lost, wandering, and at times risking their **very lives because they wanted to trust in** things and not the One who knew. These men are very much like each one of us and the disciples Jesus called to follow him

[1] Brett Younger. "Theological Themes III – Luke 5:1-11" The Good Preacher.com

in today's gospel lesson. We have Peter, James and John who are all professional fishermen. They new the waters of Galilee and they were masters of their craft. They had to know what each wave conveyed. They had to **discern when a storm was brewing so that they** could get safely back to shore. They had to know at what time of day to lower their nets and at what time **to call it quits even if they had** caught nothing. The fish simply were not going to be there. They knew fishing like the backs of their hands. In today's gospel reading from Luke, we see that Peter, James and John had come **ashore and were cleaning their nets** when Jesus climbed aboard Peter's vessel and asked him to go out into the shallow water so that Jesus could continue **to teach the crowds gathered on shore.**

Luke's is the only gospel that shares with us this was not Peter, James and John's first encounter **with Jesus. By the time he climbed aboard Peter's boat**, they had witnessed Jesus casting out demons and even healing Peter's mother in law. So we can understand a little better why Peter complied with Jesus' request to go out a little bit. Peter had encountered God within **Jesus before and was assuredly listening** to Jesus' message as he continued to clean his nets. Once Jesus finished his teaching he then asks a very tired Peter to "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." (Lk. 5:4) Jesus is asking him to move from the shallow to the deep. We see in the subsequent verse Peter's **response, "Master, we have worked all night** long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." (Lk. 5:5) There are **many things which strike** me about today's gospel story, but here what strikes me is that Peter does not say "I will go to the deep and let **down the nets." No, he says simply, "I will let down** the nets." Yes, the inference is that he obeyed and went out into the deep, but I think it is **significant to take this passage as it presents itself to** us. How many of us give a half hearted shallow effort to God? We get to the end of our day, like these fishermen and we are tired. We

are ready to go home put on our pajamas or just comfortable clothing, eat a meal and watch mindless TV, listen to **some music or read a book and here comes the voice of God saying,** "Your work is not done. Go a little deeper. Do not be afraid because I AM with you and follow me."

"Do not be afraid" are consoling words found frequently in the Good News. These words are also frequently followed by an invitation from God to do that which requires risk on our part. **And as people of faith we can take comfort** in those words so often spoken by our teacher, Jesus. Another point of interest in today's gospel lesson is that while all four gospels tell us that Jesus taught the people on shore, **none of them capture what he actually said to the people** in the crowd. Once again we learn as much from what Jesus does, in telling Peter to go deep and let out his nets as we do from his words**. When Peter complied with letting down** the nets he pulled in so many fish that the nets almost broke, he had to call to the other boats… he **had to rely on the community** out in the water with him to help him. When he shared what God had provided they all found their boats nearly sank from the weight of God's abundant provision. Here we find the good news to be that of **God's provision and abundance not just for** ourselves, but for the community, abundance for God's kin-dom here on earth. "There is more than enough forgiveness, more than enough healing, more than enough grace."[2] Again, Jesus doesn't just instruct Peter to go out; he provides what he promises not just to the one, but to the **many. Not only were those out** at sea filled, but the people on shore subsequently benefited from their abundant catch. Jesus provided Peter, James, John, and all of us with a living example of his teaching and a living **model for what he continues to say to each one of us today, "Do not be** afraid, from now on you will be catching people." (Luke 5:10)

[2] Ibid

Faith requires something of us, just as it required something of the disciples. They were asked to walk away from their boats, away from their city, away from that which was familiar and comfortable to them in order to comply with God. Could we give up our homes, our jobs, our retirement savings, or distance ourselves from those we love to follow God? A seminary friend from a village in Africa shared with a group of us during our down time a very deep and personal struggle. He shared with us that upon graduation he would have to take his wife and seven children back to Africa. His four younger children only had memories of the United States and had forgotten the pains they experienced in Africa. He said to us, my children have had three meals a day and snacks here in the States. They are accustomed to eating at McDonald's and now God is asking me to return to my country where my children will go hungry some days. There is no McDonalds in our village and even with my salary food is not so abundant. His question to us was, "How can I do this to my children and yet how can I not obey God?" Yes, following God requires a willingness to risk and a willingness to trust in God's presence when there seems to be no other provisions for us. It requires letting go of our plans, gadgets, and devices and trusting in the one who says, "Do not be afraid."

Let us not compartmentalize God, nor place on a shelf that which God asks of us. "We think Jesus is a great help for 'spiritual matters' but irrelevant for other life issues. We compartmentalize our lives. For our jobs, we rely on company policy and procedures; for our family life, we utilize sociology and psychology; for national issues, we rely on politics; for world issues we rely on diplomacy; for finances, we rely on economics. Oh yes, for spiritual matters, we bring in Jesus."[3] In Jesus message of "go deep, follow me, I make you catchers of people", let us also see his promise of presence and provision for us along the way. We serve

[3] Ibid

a God who says to each of us, "For surely I know the plans I have for you… plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." (Jer. 29:11)

"Of course, those things **won't happen if we don't trust God enough to [move out of the** shallow waters] – even when we are tired, even when we are sure it won't work, even when conventional wisdom urges us instead to accept the seductive invitations of a materialistic **culture around us to fill our [lives] with goodies and** not give a thought to the welfare of others. What if we found ways to share what we have, whenever we have a choice in our voting or in our giving or in the ways we reach out to others and work with others to build a more compassionate world, to consider **the needs of the poor, of children, of the elderly, of** those who cannot take care of themselves whenever we make a decision in our personal or public **lives?... What if we finally forgive those who have** hurt us? What if we step up and offer our gifts to the community around us, our time and our talents in ways that help others and build up the community of God's children**?"**[4] **Faith requires something of us. Let us trust as the Rev.** Renita Weems states, **"Jesus still shows up and surprises us."**

In this Epiphany season we can all look upon our lives and see truly that Jesus still shows **up and surprises us. Even on those days** in which we are tired and ready to quit. We are called like the disciples of today's gospel lesson to share our experiences of God's abundance with one another. That is what Jesus says today is **our purpose… to go deeper**, trusting in the plans God has for us, and sharing the Good News with **others leading them to God. When we are** touched by God, we are transformed like the disciples. We cannot help but to be repentant of our sins and live our lives differently. We are called to live our lives for the kin-dom of God. While we know that faith requires something of us, **let us go out from this place unafraid, sharing the Good News of** God's abundance for all with all that we encounter. AMEN

[4] Kate Huey. "Into the Deep" Lectionary Citations Luke 5:1-11. UCC.com ; SAMUEL