

## **WELCOME 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – 3 Epiphany '19 C**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 & Luke 5:1-11

Good morning! Welcome to worship today!

Happy Australia Day weekend!

It is great to have you here. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

Routines/patterns/habits - we all have them.. From a regular wake-up time to school & work schedules to patterns/habits/routines in relationships...in daily quiet times, in weekly scheduling. Routines bring order to chaos & make life predictable & less scary. They bring comfort and stability. Some are helpful...some not so much

Routines/patterns/habits can also be dangerous...our habits can become the deciding controlling factor in our lives & lead us to live on auto-pilot in a rut...like living in constant peak hour city traffic narrowing our vision, limiting our ability to grow, and blinding us to new opportunities.

But Jesus constantly calls us away from our complacency, into a new awareness & engagement with our lives and to deeper trust in him. Jesus calls us to refocus on his kingdom calling for our lives...

*"Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."*

Jesus calls us to leave the shallows of our faith our repetitive habits that go nowhere and the ruts we call "life" to venture into the deeper water of trust & dependence... Because it's there, in the deep water & difficult & uncertain work of his kingdom that he promises an abundance of blessing like you have never imagined.

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Father God, you knew us before we knew ourselves. You call us even now to be your people in service to your world. Create in us hearts that are bold in sharing your promises wherever you send us, and speaking the Word that you give us. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, place your words upon our lips, your grace upon our hearts & your power in our lives so that everywhere we are your Kingdom is seen & claims hearts & lives in your love for all eternity... In the name of your beloved Son Jesus we pray. Amen.

### 3 EPIPHANY '19 C – A TIME OF NO REGRETS: RE-FOCUS

#### FAITH CHAT:

1. Share a time when you were “stretched beyond your limits.” Emotionally physically spiritually...
2. How was Jesus present for you in that time?

Time is a funny thing. I have been reading some articles about why older adults perceive time to move more rapidly than younger folks...esp children. All sorts of interesting theories...won't bore you w/ details...but one really caught me. Most older adults are familiar with the world we inhabit. We reach an age/stage/place in life & not much changes. Our life is pretty much the same one day to the next. House. Car. Job. Spouse. Stores. Clothes. Routes we take b/t points A & B. And our brains don't record familiar/routine experiences the same way they store new/novel ones. For a 5-year-old...almost every day there's something new; so they perceive time to move rapidly because they are constantly receiving & recording new stuff. For someone my age & beyond...there's less “new” in my world. Me/folks like me have to work to get out of the familiar & the routine.

Which takes us to the shore of the Sea of Galilee...Peter made a living by rote/routine. He has been doing life this way most of his life. Night after night, week after week, season after season. He's a fisherman & lives by the regular tides & patterns & rhythms & routines of fishing. But tonight is different. This time, the usual routine didn't work. The habits/patterns/rhythms netted zero/zip/zilch/nada/nothing. Not One Fish.

Now...Paul can verify I know something about “catching no fish.” But we can all attest to days of “empty nets.” Times when you do everything right, give it your best, say your prayers, live faithfully, work hard...and you didn't get that job...your kid wound up in strife...still didn't rain & the locusts showed up...the sickness won... marriage went from frying pan to fire. You did all you knew how to do & the nets still came up empty...all you had to show for your efforts was frustration, doubt, grief, disappointment, sadness, anger, fear, confusion...& oh yeah...empty nets.

But the Jesus shows up with an outrageous request...After using Peter's boat as a makeshift pulpit Jesus says, *“Now go out where it is deeper, & let down your nets to catch some fish.”* You can almost feel Peter's frustration...*“Master, we've worked hard all night & haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”* The familiar...the safe...the usual...the regular... the expected...the normal...Of course Peter's going to argue for that because we all do. No one wants to volunteer for “deeper water.” No one puts their hand up for more work...harder work...riskier work In the deeper water...it's deeper...the waves are bigger...the storms are rougher... the winds are stronger...it's harder work & more dangerous work ‘where it's deeper.’ I'm farther away from shore where it's safe if I'm out ‘where it's deeper.’ I know where the sandbars & reefs & shoals are close in...I don't know that ‘where it's deeper.’ I understand Peter...really I do. Every empty net is an accusation against my competence. Every empty net is a sign of my failure. Every empty net reminds me of the “one that got away.” Every empty net tells me I'm not quite the man I pretend to be...not quite as \_\_\_\_\_ as I want to be. Every empty net points its ugly finger...shame guilt sadness regret...lost opportunity...mistake disastrous choice....

I know empty nets. You know empty nets...BUT there's a cure for empty nets...only 1 deep water...The cure for empty nets: Do what Jesus asks you to do & see what happens...that always means deeper water. I love Peter...I love the way he wears his life full open honest transparent all the time. He doesn't really want to do what Jesus' says do. He says so...Look...we fished all night. Did all the things fisherman do. Got nothing. I know we're the professionals, but we tried every trick in the book & got 0. Don't rub it in & make us look even dumber than we feel...we don't need to fail again... *But because you say so, I will let down the nets.* Because YOU say so... Over & over again in his life, Jesus leads Peter to a frightening discovery...and it might be best 'cos this might be new to some of you...to just reach out & take hold of the person sitting next to you if this is new it might scare you out of here...and holding on is the best way to live through it...But this is one of those times when Jesus wants Peter & you & me to discover that the only sure thing – rock solid never failing always constant holding us secure...is Jesus. Everything else can be gone in a flash...nothing else has the power to sustain & protect & heal & bring joy & restore One other time...John recounts the feeding of the 5000 (Jn 6) The next day the crowds come back looking for another sandwich & Jesus holds 'em off & explains... *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; & this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh... anyone who eats my flesh & drinks my blood has eternal life, & I will raise that person at the last day. For my flesh is true food, & my blood is true drink.”* At that point the crowd backs off & starts to walk away...that whole eating flesh/drinking blood thing...Jesus then asks the 12 *“Are you also going to leave?”* But Peter says, *“Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe, & we know you are the Holy One of God.”* The only sure thing – rock solid never failing always constant holding us secure...is Jesus.

Everything else can be gone in a flash...nothing else has the power to sustain & protect & heal & bring joy & restore...*Because you say so...to whom would we go?*

Gang...That's the essence of faith! Trust Jesus knows what he's talking about even if you can't fully understand Trust that Jesus will provide what he promises to provide even if right now you can't see it. Trust Jesus for this life AND the one he offers eternally even though it all looks pretty shaky some days. Do what Jesus asks you to do even if you 'know better.' Do what Jesus asks you to do even if you've sort of tried that before & didn't like it...didn't work the way you thought it would. Just do what Jesus says...live like he really does know what he's up to in your life...like he knows what he's doing to save this world from sin/death/hell...set you free from you. ...live like he knows what his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven should look like where you are...like he knows what you need & where you need to trust him more...  
...live like he knows how to heal & restore your life...live like he's got this...

I don't know where I heard this first...but I have found it to be true so many times I can't count... There are no miracles in shallow water. Where everything is safe... where everything is familiar...where everything is the same as it always was...there are no miracles. Say it with me, "there are no miracles in shallow water." Peter has to go to that place where only Jesus can put fish in the net for there to be a miraculous catch of fish. Later Peter would have to GET OUT OF THE BOAT to discover Jesus really did intend for him to walk on water...The disciples would have to give Jesus the 5 loaves of bread & those two little fish to see that Jesus did in fact intend to feed those 5000+ with leftovers to spare...Jesus did in fact have to suffer & die & rise, for the world to experience the death of death & hell's destruction & the complete overthrow of evil. Where everything is safe...where everything is familiar...where everything is the same as it has always been...there are no miracles. "There are no miracles in shallow water."

A few weeks ago I stuck this little thing by Francis Chan in the GP: "God doesn't call us to be comfortable. He calls us to trust Him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in deep trouble if He doesn't come through." When all Peter knows is all Peter knows...the nets stay empty. But when Peter releases his life into Jesus' hands the nets are so full the boats start to sink. When all you rely on is all you rely on...the nets stay empty. But when we release our lives to Jesus... When we give up our tired same old same old...for the deeper water...

You see this isn't a story about fishing...It's not about evangelism either really. It's about faith & transformation that only Jesus can produce in us. Jesus is going to replace Peter's empty nets for an abundant full to overflowing life. Jesus is going to take Peter's frustration & futility & in their place give him joy & love that never end. Jesus is going to take Peter & through his reluctant trust build his church...manifest his life in his body...each one of us. That is precisely what Jesus seeks in you & me...to take our reluctant trust our frustration our futility our faltering failing flailing & in their place love life joy peace strength, compassion, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, hope, healing, & a vision for the future. Trusting Jesus in deep water is always a place of sacred transformation, a place of new life & abundance beyond mere quantity.

Jesus pushes us out of the comfortable places to live a life of power & purpose...his power & his purpose so the world can be grasped by the good news of God's redeeming love for us all. Jesus constantly calls us away from our complacency, into a new awareness & engagement with our lives and to deeper trust in him. Jesus calls us to refocus on his kingdom calling for our lives. What did he say to Peter when Peter was sure he didn't want anything more to do with Jesus? "*Don't be afraid...from now on you'll be catching people.*"

I'm not sure Peter knew it at the time...But THAT IS where the real deep water is...in fishing for/catching people...that's where the risk is higher...the danger greater...the storms more fierce...the threats of the evil one more ferocious...the course more uncharted...THAT IS where the real deep water is but it is ONLY THERE that Peter you or I discover our true vocation. Agents of grace & his kingdom that never ends

In dragging the net of God's love through the deep water & rough seas dangerous storms of this world hoping for nothing less than an abundant catch...that's where we discover our true vocation...what we were created & called by God to be...that's where Jesus works miracles...that's where Jesus works through us...

*"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven."* Maybe now is the time for "deeper water." Maybe it's time to think & live deeper, love riskier, reach wider, serve more outrageously, give without counting how much...Jesus calls us to leave the shallows of our faith our repetitive habits that go nowhere & the ruts we call "life" to venture into the deeper water of trust & dependence... Because it's there, in the deep water & difficult & uncertain work of his kingdom that he promises an abundance of blessing like we have never imagined.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father put to death in me everything but your presence. Bring to life in me only the image of your Son and the power of your Spirit. Let all that we are and all that we do lift your Name and your glory before the world. Widen your Kingdom's embrace in this town through our heart and our arms. In your holy name we pray...Amen**