

**Epiphany 5**

Isaiah 6:1-8

**Year C**

Psalm 138

**St John the Divine**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

**Don't rock the boat!**

My father, George, loved fishing. He liked nothing better than to get into a small rowing boat, cast off and head out into deeper water. His idea of bliss was to throw out his line and silently sit until he felt a bite – preferably a big one!

Sometimes, I was with him.

There was only one problem. Sometimes the fish took a long time to bite – and I wasn't very good at either sitting still – or being silent.

There was never a big bite on my line – and I would pass the time rocking from side to side until the little boat had quite a bit of momentum.

'Stop rocking the boat!!' My father would say. 'Stop rocking the boat!'

There's a great fishing story in today's Gospel reading!

I don't know if anyone rocked the boat – but I do know that (in the beginning) there weren't too many fish!

*'(Jesus) sat down and taught the people from (Simon's) boat. When he had finished speaking . . . , Jesus said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'* Luke 5:3

I wonder why Simon obeyed? Simon was a professional fisherman. He knew his job. He was tired. He'd worked all night – and there were definitely no fish!!

Had he listened to Jesus' teaching whilst they were out on the water?

Was he remembering that just a little while before, Jesus had healed his mother in law of a fever?

Whatever it was that moved him, Simon obeyed.

*'When they (let down the nets), they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats so that they began to sink.'* Luke 5:7

**Don't rock the boat!!**

Simon's response was so unexpected.

His attention was drawn to Jesus – not to the sinking boats full of fish – and his words were of penitence:

*'He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"*

Sometimes our lives can be rocked by something that's amazed us; something that has challenged us; something that we've heard or something that is beyond our understanding. Just as it was with Simon, on this occasion, so it was with Isaiah in the Old Testament reading. In the presence of the Holy One, overwhelmed by his vision of the Lord, Isaiah too was suddenly convicted of his own sinfulness and unworthiness; *'Woe is me (he said)! I am*

*lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live amongst a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! Isaiah 6:5*

The story of both these men is miraculous – not just because of Isaiah’s powerful vision, nor because of the sheer number of fish Peter and his companions caught in the nets. The stories are miraculous because of the powerful presence and grace of God who forgives our sins and sets us free; who ‘rocks our boat’ and brings new life, new direction and new purpose.

*‘The seraph touched my mouth with (a burning coal) and said ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your sin has departed and your sin is blotted out. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said ‘Here I am; send me.’*  
*Isaiah 6:8*

*‘Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’ Luke 5:10*

### **Don’t rock the boat!**

I imagine that most of us like life to be smooth, predictable and successful. We don’t like too much change. Yet, in the past two years of Covid, we’ve discovered that we’ve had to be flexible and brave. We’ve discovered that we need each other and for many of us, our relationship to God has been a lifeline; a source of consolation, companionship and strength - but I wonder how many of us have felt that our little boat has been rocked; or that our every attempt to ‘put down our nets’ in our work has been unrewarded? I wonder how many of us have lost heart and also how many of us have gained new strength?

Could it be that our loving God is “rocking our boat” today, calling us out of our comfort zone, breaking into our life with a renewed assurance of love and forgiveness and asking us to once more cast our nets into the deep water of following Jesus – so that others may know God’s presence and hear God’s call?

*I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’  
And I said ‘Here I am; send me.’*  
*Isaiah 6:8*

*Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching people.’  
When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.’*