

***Sermon***

***Epiphany 5 Year C—February 10, 2019***

***Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina***

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Simon had not had much luck fishing in the earlier part of the day, when Jesus asked him again to set out into deeper waters. *'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.'* When they had done this, they had caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break... Then 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. So, my question is, **"How dependent is our faith on not being challenged or altered in any way?"**

When was the last time that you lived through a power outage at your home and community? If you have been a resident of Charleston for many years, I suspect it was during one of the

hurricanes. We have been fortunate so far, these three years living in Charleston to not once experiencing a power outage or blackout. In fact, the last time that we experienced such an outage was at our farm in Versailles, Kentucky during a snowy-ice storm. Do you remember that time that your house and community were suddenly strangely quiet and very, very dark?

I remember inching my way in the darkness into our kitchen for a book of matches and the candles. Living out in the country we were prepared though with many flashlights, although no generator—we only bought one of those here this past year at the threat of another hurricane. Initially, warming oneself by the fireplace, making coffee the old-fashioned way, and reading by candlelight feels quaint and adventurous. I even thought of Abraham Lincoln and all those books he read by candlelight. However, very quickly you know it's not that amusing, in fact it is a real pain and inconvenience.

Perhaps you too have experienced that living in the dark for a while though in a paradoxical way can be very enlightening? How many times did you find yourself turning on a light switch as you entered a room? Did you hit it a second time, after it didn't

respond to your initial command? Did the power outage cause you to think through your daily routine in a new way? I remember suddenly realizing, *how can I blow dry my hair?* And did it cause you to stop and think of the all the adults and children in our world, many more than not, who are forced to contend with a life like this every day, most likely while being hungry and thirsty? How dependent did you find yourself on electric power and the routine and sameness that it gives to your life?

Saint Augustine once said, *Faith is to believe what we do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.* Perhaps when we are forced to walk around in the darkness it moves us to reflect upon our faith—our own ability to believe in things that we cannot see, but know to be true? Certainly, the absence of electricity, darkness, challenges our daily lives. Yet, did it not also perhaps challenge your assuredness that things cannot be changed? For one thing is certain with a power outage, and that is that things are suddenly altered, and we are challenged to live in a new way. And isn't that a necessary condition for faithfulness in our Christian lives—that we are open to the possibility of our faith evolving...our faith changing...and our faith maybe even being altered a bit? Is it possible to be so certain about God that we actually shut the possibility of the infusion of God's mind and will

into ours? In other words, do you keep hitting the same light switch even when the lights won't come on?

In today's Gospel from Luke, let us imagine together what would have happened next if Simon were unwilling to let down the nets again? After all, he knew that they had not caught anything that very same morning. We couldn't blame Simon if he said that wasn't happening again. Without letting down the nets again, would these fishermen have then left everything and followed Christ?

So, is your faith in Jesus Christ open to being challenged by God's power and activity in your life and the life of this community of faith? Are you willing to be in the dark a bit? Are you willing to be uncomfortable for a time? Are you willing to be open to the power of God challenging and altering your faith? Could Christ possibly be asking you and me to let our faith go down deeper?

20<sup>th</sup> century American pastor, Henry Emerson Fosdick, once had this to say about faith; *I would rather live in a world where my life is surrounded by mystery, than live in a world so small that my*

*mind could comprehend it.* May we have the courage to put out  
our nets into the deep waters...+**AMEN**.