

# Sermon Sparkler for Epiphany Five

Here Jesus preaches the Word of God. He is hard-pressed by the crowd, so he commandeers a fishing boat.

We'll see that such a boat will become the main vehicle Jesus used to spread the Word of God. This points to one of the more astonishing aspects of Jesus' ministry. Jesus touched billions of lives and his actions have reverberated across millennia, yet the majority of his ministry took place so very locally. His ministry focused on a 7-mile by 13-mile lake easily ferried across by these fishermen! Isn't that wild? If it ever feels like your little chunk of Jersey is just too small, that there is nothing to be done here—don't believe it! With God's help we can move mountain and more!

Jesus sits in the boat to preach. Some people point out a practice in the synagogue of standing to read scripture and sitting to preach. You can see an example of this in Luke 4:16-20. But, I think there is a simpler explanation in this case, if you don't have to you don't stand up in a boat.

Jesus then performs this miracle of a good catch at the wrong time and in the wrong place for catching fish. This is when Peter finally gets it; God has come near. I suspect this says something about the nature of preaching the gospel. It has to connect with the hearer. The message has to be articulated in the vernacular, whatever the language happens to be; in this case the vocabulary is a good catch.

This bowls Peter over and he repents in the face of God's actions in this preacher on the prow of his boat. That's what an encounter with God does, it relativizes us, which can cause us to tremble in fear or become introspective.

Jesus says then, that memorable line, "I will make you fishers of people." He's probably referencing scripture when he says this, specifically Jeremiah 16:16, which is about God bringing God's people back from captivity in Babylon by sending fishers and hunters of people.

- 🪿 I know you touched on vocation back in December, but what if you bring it up again—ask what boat prows congregants have that can help preach the Word of God? How is God calling them within their particular roles and relationships to make Christ known?
- 🪿 Along the same lines, this piece of scripture leads us to asset mapping. What does the congregation already have that can point to Christ and his Gospel?
- 🪿 How do we talk about Jesus? Do we use idioms that people can relate to, or is it just easier to use insider language? What insider language does your congregation use without realizing it?