**At Your Word, I Will**

Based on [Luke 5:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk5.1-11)

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Fifth Sunday after Trinity

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Since COVID began to sweep our nation and our world we have seen our society and government give guidance in response. Most recently, Toronto has made mandatory the use of masks in indoor public spaces. It is not the only city in the world to do so. And people respond differently to the idea. Some people have long criticized the use of masks, saying they don’t do much, if anything for protection. Others say that masks may help and recommendations are fine, but a government goes too far in mandating them. And there are some who look to the government for guidance, and are happy to wear a mask if the authorities think it best. Regardless of where you might come down on the issue, it brings to mind the question of trust in the face of uncertainty. Regardless of whether masks work, is it your moral duty to wear one if society recommends it?

In the Gospel, Jesus’ soon to be disciples had been fishing all night with no success. They had called it a day, or a night, and were on shore washing their nets, cleaning up, as it were, after work. They were done, but Jesus told Peter to put out the nets again. Essentially, Jesus is telling him to go out to work again, dirty the nets again, all because Jesus said so.

Not only did this request mean a lot more work for Peter and others, who had already worked their shift and cleaned up, but it was also a matter of professionalism. Jesus was a carpenter, not a fisherman. Who is he to tell Peter his trade? These professional fishermen had fished all night to no avail. They knew the best places to fish, the most likely times, they had likely been doing it their whole lives. And now a carpenter comes by and is going to school them in fishing. Peter has cause not only to be tired, and dejected for not having caught fish all night, but also annoyed.

I’m old enough to remember when we were told a couple of months ago that masks wouldn’t do much to stop the spread. Then we were told they are recommended. Now some are being told they are mandatory. If they were made mandatory when this thing started it would be different, but now it seems people have become a bit annoyed. The authorities that be have gotten it wrong many times, seem to not know what they’re doing. They have shut down economies, schools, libraries, courts...most of society. Huge measures with huge consequences, as we have recently heard this week that so far canada has amassed some 300 billion dollars of debt in this. Was it worth it? Or by shutting down the world for a virus that has a very low mortality rate for all but the most elderly and infirm...were they using a bazooka to kill a fly? It is true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but is a pound of prevention worth an ounce of cure?

Back to the gospel... is it worth resullying the nets and working a double shift because of the word of a carpenter? Doesn’t seem likely, and Peter’s professional opinion on the matter is that casting out the nets now would do little if any good. Peter says as much, “”Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word, I will let down the nets.” And he did, and it proved successful.

All this to say, in situations of probabilities, statistics and uncertainties...it is hard to know who to trust. Governments and agencies are but mortal...but Jesus Christ died, was raised and lives forever. And at his word, we are confident to let down our nets, or turn the other cheek, or repay evil with good...even if, in our professional opinion as sinful human beings, it might not seem to do any good. I don’t know how many times when someone has apologized to me I thought, “Why forgive them, it’s only going to happen again? They shouldn’t be able to get away with such carelessness.” And then I remember Jesus words’, “If someone sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” Jesus doesn’t say “It will work” your purposes, but it will work his. He has forgiven us more times than we can count, and through this gospel of forgiveness, we are to pay forward what he paid for us on the cross.

“At your word, I will”. That is exactly what trust in God looks like. It looks like the world is spinning out of control, but at your word I will not fear. It looks like my situation is hopeless, but at your word, I will rejoice. It looks like I will never be able to keep from sinning, from anger, from greed, from contempt, from envy, from spite...but at your Word, I will believe that I am forgiven.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, that is the point of our gathering to receive the Sacrament of the Altar. We daily sin much, and deserve nothing but punishment. And as many times as we are forgiven, we sin seven times more. As many times as we go out fishing for righteousness our nets come back empty; but Jesus says to let them down again. We go to the Lord’s Supper to hear Jesus say to us, “receive my body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.” It may not look like much, bread and wine. It may not seem like much, aside from all the pomp and circumstance of robes, and polished vessels, and pretty paraments. But it is not what it looks like that matters. It is what Jesus says. And he says, “Do this in remembrance of me, for the forgiveness of sins.” He says, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.”

We cannot say “I don’t think a mask will do much good, but at your word, Dr. Faucci, I will wear a mask”, and believe it will work...because Faucci and others are just men. The government may be right or wrong about masks...and believe what you will. But Jesus cannot be wrong in his word. He is here, at this altar, and has invited you saying, “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And our response in faith?...”I have been wearied by my sin to no avail, but at your word I will come to you and have peace.”