

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany  
Saturday, February 6, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, February 7, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

## **“God Comes Even When We Say ‘Go Away’.”**

Luke 5:1-11

Our Gospel reading offers so many wonderful themes or ideas to preach on. We could focus on what it means to be called to faith in Christ -- the cost of discipleship: that we must leave behind the life we once knew. We could focus on everything that Peter, Andrew, James, and John gave up for the sake of the Gospel.

We could focus on Jesus' preaching style -- that the crowds gathered around listening to Him because when Jesus spoke, He spoke the Word of God and as we heard last week, His message had authority.

Or we could just scrap the whole thing and talk about the Super Bowl. But if that is what you truly desire, you would have stayed home, because the pre-game show already started. I'm not kidding - it really has started. Millions will sit through hours of analysis and heart-warming stories about how difficult some of these millionaires lives have been.

I believe we have a far greater story and much more significant victory to celebrate this morning.

As I said, we could talk about a lot of things, but what intrigues me more than any football game (even if my beloved Dallas Cowboys

were playing) is Peter's response to the miracle of the great catch of fish. Peter falls at Christ's knees and says: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord!" Upon hearing the Word of God preached, and witnessing the miracle, Peter knew who was in his boat. God Himself was sitting in Peter's fishing boat. Peter was overwhelmed and felt totally unworthy.

Peter knew what kind of a person he was: "I am a sinful man." God should not be associating with such a person -- at least God should not be around after a bad night of fishing, where Peter more than likely had a few choice words for the fish that eluded his net.

We sometimes feel that God shouldn't be around at certain times of our lives. We feel comfortable praying at night before going to sleep because we are relaxed, tranquil, at peace with ourselves, and we feel at peace with God. We know that this is a good time to pray and have the Lord listening.

But the Lord tells us to pray without ceasing. This does not mean that you need to have a prayer book in your hand 24 hours a day. It means that in all situations: whether we are tranquil, frustrated, angry, even if we know we are sinning at the time; God desires that we call upon His Name -- in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks, as the catechism says.

Our first instinct when faced with situations that have us acting in a not-so-Godlike manner is to put God on hold until we can figure things out or get them under control. But those are precisely the times

that rather than doing like Peter and telling God: “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”; we need to say: “Lord, come, heal me quickly; I am a sinful man.”

So long as God is out of the picture, or is viewed as an inconvenience or a chore to spend time with (how many of you have sat in these pews saying, “Hurry up Pastor, we’ve got some things to do. (the pre-game has started”)? What could possibly be more important than what we are doing right now? If our relationship with God is a chore, we will never “figure things out or get our lives under control.” We will remain as frustrated as Peter was when he spent the entire night fishing without even catching one fish for breakfast.

Only God can heal. Only God can save. As the angel of the Lord said to Isaiah who despaired for being a “man of unclean lips,” the angel said, “your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” No matter what sin, fault, or mistake you make, in your Baptism and throughout your life of faith, God has promised to forgive.

And especially when we think that God should not be around to see or hear what is going on; that is precisely the time when we need to call upon His Name -- and you might as well, because He is already there. As often as we say, “Depart from me, Lord; I am a sinful man! (Go away for now!)” the greatness of God is revealed in that He never leaves us or forsakes us. As the Lord has promised, “I am with you always to the very end of the age.” Amen.