

I really like that song about Jesus coming to the lakeshore to find his first disciples. Maybe it's because I love the Spanish language. Maybe it's because we live on the coast and I love words about beaches and boats. Maybe because it's a very pleasant melody that is easy to learn. But most of all, the lyrics are wonderful: describing the calling from God to be like a great adventure, like going out fishing into deeper waters, other seas, like taking a risk to try new things, to meet new people, and find new ways of being with others. It is the analogy Jesus used: You are "fishermen," but I'll show you how to be "fishers of men."

The story of Jesus calling the first disciples tells us a lot about how Jesus may be calling each of us to follow him. Jesus meets Peter, Andrew, James and John in their own setting, in the world of fishing. I think Jesus wants to meet each of us in our own settings and show us how to use our particular gifts to make the world a place with more love for neighbor.

And did Jesus expect people to immediately follow him at first meeting? It might appear that way, that they dropped their fishnets immediately. Yet Most scholars imagine that the fishermen knew Jesus or at least knew about Jesus before this encounter and the miraculous catch of so many fish.

The analogy of Jesus' challenge to fish for people, in deeper water, thus applies to fellowship or community... put our hooks, our invites, out into deeper water, out into a broader community. Cast a broad net! Invite any species of "fish" to join us! I think the liberal churches like UCC found many evangelicals so pushy that we forgot the value of simple invitations to community. I sometimes simply ask people, Do you have a spiritual community? We are broad minded, with a broad welcome.

We can also use the depth analogy to say: *Think* more deeply about life and meaning. Thomas Moore, who wrote *Care of the Soul*, and *A Religion of One's Own*, signed a copy of his recent book for me. He wrote: "Go Deep!" Naturally, I thought the theme would make a good song... I wrote about cell phones and screens leading us to all kinds of distractions and hurting relationships. I wrote about the dangers of dualistic thinking, of emphasizing right and wrong or black and white. There is a much deeper way of dialogue with one another. I wrote about the Bible, and the dangers of extreme literalism, how it can lead to dualistic black and white thinking. Going deeper into the Bible is allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, considering the historical context of Bible stories, as well as the timeless truths. Progressive Christians often say, We take the Bible "seriously," not always literally.

The Call of God, to further the Beloved Community, in the church life, or even as extended community, is something that will always be specific to our particular gifts, since we are indeed all very different. God would not call us to do something that we had no skill at... so our sense of "vocation" may indeed have to be "trial and error" for much of our life.

People often ask me about my own calling to be a preacher and minister for Jesus. I usually say that there was no one moment. It was over time that I assessed my own skills and gifts. My life did indeed have many twists and turns, different callings at different stages of life. In college, I was feeling a call to to be a doctor...or at least I knew I was called to the sciences and had plenty of skill for my chemistry major! But four years later I was able to see and understand more deeply, that I did not actually love my science studies; what I really loved was the bedside encounters with people

in hospitals or nursing homes, and I loved hearing their life stories. (That still holds true).

I am well aware that in this life, unless weaned on a silver spoon, most of us actually need a paying J-O-B. But we also may find out by trial and error that our heart is not in our J-O-B! How great it can be if you can do what you love, and love what you do! I thought I had combined JOB and love for it when I chose to teach Spanish rather than go to med school. Well, maybe for a while, but... there were enough negatives about constant correcting papers and discipline issues with students that I realized I may love the language, but not all the trials of teaching it every day to teenagers! And, yes, all along, God seemed to be whispering to me: You love hearing sermons, you love singing hymns, you love praying and meditating, you love caring for elderly folks and listening to their life stories! Took me to about age 31. (I was a slow learner; Jesus started his full time ministry at age 30!)

Since we all have different skills, the question becomes how can we use our particular gifts in the service of spreading the Good News? But another question is are we willing to make Jesus' Good News a top priority in our lives, as it was for those early disciples, who like Peter began to call him Master, and took seriously his call to *Seek First* the Kingdom of God. Can it be a top priority: to live in Jesus Way, to show compassion and love in all our relationships, regardless of what particular job we are doing?

We can live on the surface of life, and fish in shallow waters, or do as Jesus said: Go out into deeper waters, try something new. Jesus said at the last supper "A new commandment I give you: to love one another." It doesn't sound very new or profound, does it? But it really is, because we all fall short of loving well. Love has so much to do with compassion and forgiveness... with seeing the

suffering and the sin in this world, and meeting it with kindness of compassion and the truth needed for reconciliation. The command to love is not a surface thing. With all due respect to Valentine gestures, it is not just flowers and candy and cards but something deeper and more lasting.

Like fishing in deeper waters or other seas, the entire Gospel of Jesus needs us to look more deeply into our lives, find the things that really matter to our hearts, our relationships, our connection with every other being. Here's the song that I wrote, called **Going Deeper**:

*1. We have seen that our cell phones can be distracting; we know the dangers of multitasking. Going deeper, we realize that scattered attention is harmful to work, and deepening affection!*

*2. On the surface, things may seem black and white, our viewpoints clear as day and night. Going deeper, we realize that rainbow hues give beauty to life, and bring good news!*

***Chorus: Going deeper in spirit is our call today, led by our Savior, the truth and the way. Healed by his grace we are lost and found; with his indwelling spirit, Love abounds!***

*3. We have heard in a song "Don't worry be happy!" But moods come and go, that's reality! Going deeper, we realize the joy of salvation... is found in constant transformation!*

*4. We are caught in the prison of right and wrong. We're busy judging all the day long. The Master says to cast the first stone if without sin... but none are thrown! **(Chorus)***

*5. It's the Word of God that we seek to follow. If rigidly read, it can ring hollow. The God who spoke in diverse ways, still speaks in many language today! **(Chorus)***