

“Use the Right Hook”

January 19, 2014

John 1:29-42

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." 35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). (RSV)

Today we hear a lesser known version of the calling of the first Disciples. This is the version found in John. The version varies a bit from the story we are fairly familiar with found in the other three Gospels more commonly referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they are fairly cohesive with one another. Hear it again in Mark 1: 16-20 and yet again in Matthew 4: 18- 20 and finally hear the last version in Luke 5: 1-11. It is one of the few stories found in all the Gospels. This calling of the first Disciples of Jesus is one we know in our story telling minds. It is one we could easily retell the essential core of to others simply “Follow Me” is all we need to do and know. We need to follow Jesus. The end.

However, it is not the end. The reason it is important to note that this story is one that we can read in its various forms in all four Gospels is very telling in our spiritual lives. Recall please that not every aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus is found in every Gospel. The Gospel of John and Mark begin with the start of Jesus’ ministry and the calling of his first Disciples. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with his birth and lead up to the calling of the first Disciples.

But the Gospel of John is important in its very difference. All of the Gospels were written with Specific audiences in mind and those audiences played a key role in how the accounts were written and in how we can utilize them today. For many the Gospel of John was important in understanding the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus and to prove that John the Baptist was not Jesus but actually sent people to Jesus.

For many this was the right hook to get them to believe and follow after Jesus. No we are not talking in boxing terms in relationship to the sermon title today we are talking about hooking people. There is a reason when we consider the calling of the first Disciples we recognize the phrase “I will make you Fisher’s of Men.” The first Disciples were fishermen who fished for a living. Who better to understand that the right hook makes a world of difference.

Now I am not an expert in fishing for fish. But even I recognize as a novice that different hooks and lures will attract different fish to your line. There is a reason this metaphor is used in countless ways. I mean we even use it in the romantic laws of attraction sense. I am pretty sure we can all finish the phrase “there are plenty of fish...(in the sea).” We inherently recognize that we will be and are attracted to different things as people.

The problem however is that we also tend to use that mentality that there are plenty of churches in the sea, or in our town, or just down the street, as well. It is increasingly easy for us to flit to another congregation or group or for those visiting (and to our visitors this is not intended as a finger point at you at all so please bear with me) it means well that did not taste exactly right so I will move onward.

It begs the question though will any church body truly be perfect? As the body is made up of imperfect and sinful individuals I do not believe so. So as we are in the quest for a congregation that is filled with life and growth and spiritual renewal what was the right hook that brought use here?

For the Disciples to Follow after Jesus it was a simple matter of their lives being immersed in the waiting for the Messiah. They saw him and knew him and John pointed out to them that this was He who was the Messiah. So they Followed. They had been given the right hook and hook, line, and sinker they followed that line that led them to their Lord.

What is our hook as a church that compels people to follow after the Christ we know and love. You see we are Disciples of Christ. It is a part of our identity both as our denomination and as the call on our hearts to Follow the Lord. We were all led to God in a variety of ways and means but something hooked us and compelled us and called us to follow.

Some of us it is what we grew up with, our parents were our hook, for others we met someone who hooked us in, still others are not quite sure that the hook they have experienced feels right and others still broke away and had to be hooked back in.

The most difficult thing for a Church is to develop our vision our hook that brings people coming back week in and week out. Sometimes we have to take a step back to move ahead but that is where we as a congregation are at we have moved and shifted and are re-hooking our lines.

The biggest too to remember is patience. Most good fisherpeople will tell you that it takes patience to hook a fish. We can not expect to haul one in every time, that is not a realistic expectation. But when we continually thread our lines with the right hook, the hook that says I follow Jesus, we will eventually have someone show interest.