

Fifth Sunday Ordinary Time

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

Ps 138:1-5, 7-8

1 Cor 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11



It is the gift of the artist not only to see possibilities but to bring them into reality. A Michelangelo sees the young David in a flawed block of marble and chisels away until we can see him as well.

With what at first sound like random notes, the great composers string together melodies that stir our spirits.

They are a reflection of the genius of our Creator.

God not only sees in us possibilities we could never imagine, but he labors to bring that potential to fulfillment.

We may see ourselves as flawed, but God sees our beauty and chisels away until others can see it as well.

We may see the events of our lives as random, but God directs those events to lead us to sanctification and to inspire others.

When Jesus first meets him, Simon is a fisherman like any other tending his nets on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias.

The day began as a waste since he had no catch to take to market after a night of labor.

Then Jesus chooses his boat to be the one from which he will proclaim the word of God to the pressing crowd.

Though Luke does not record Jesus' words for us, they were no doubt powerful enough to effect a change in Simon Peter.

He is willing to obey Jesus and put out into the deep water for another go at a catch even though he knows it is too late in the day and even though his previous efforts met with nothing but futility.

The miraculous catch of fish shakes Simon Peter to his core, overwhelming him with fear and shame.

He saw himself as a sinner and a failed fisherman.

But Jesus somehow saw a man of faith cowering in that bow, a man willing to leave everything to follow him.

He saw in him a leader who was able to convince his partners James and John to do the same.

Jesus saw a greatness in Simon Peter that no one else could see and that no one else could bring out.

And, as unlikely as it seemed at the time, it was upon the rock of this simple fisherman's faith that he would build his church.

When Jesus first met Paul, he was hurrying on to Damascus, "still breathing murderous threats," to persecute the followers of Christ.

He was full of a rageful purpose to bring to an end this new way, which he saw as a threat to his people.

It seemed as though nothing could stop him.

The disciples knew him to be a murderer and an enemy.

But Jesus saw in him one who would proclaim the good news to the Gentiles.

Paul saw himself as the least of the apostles because he had persecuted the church.

But no one besides Jesus himself has been as influential in shaping the Christianity we live today.

Jesus saw greatness in Paul and so appeared to him in all his risen glory to enlist him in the effort of spreading the Gospel.

We could go on and on giving examples throughout the Scriptures of the prophet Isaiah; of Mary, the virgin of Nazareth; of Mary Magdalene, who stood at the foot of the cross and was the first witness to the Resurrection;

and of the poor widow who gave her last pennies to the Temple treasury.

They are all women and men who seemed unremarkable in the view of the world but who were called to greatness through faith.

Scripture does not present them to us as examples of what ordinary folk can do if they just “set their mind to it.”

Rather they are models of the marvels God can accomplish with humble believers who are willing to entrust their lives to him.

They illustrate the ability of God to see and bring out in us more than we could ever hope for or imagine.

In every instance, it begins with the encounter with Jesus.

Meeting Jesus was all it took to change the course of one’s life.

Those who left everything to follow him heard his teaching, saw firsthand his miracles, and shared a friendship with him both before and after his resurrection that is unique and unrepeatable.

They are privileged witnesses to everything Jesus did and said.

However that does not mean that we cannot encounter Christ and be changed by him.

On the contrary, every time we read the Scriptures and celebrate the sacraments, Christ makes himself present to us in the Holy Spirit in a life-changing way.

It is different from how Peter, Paul, and Martha experienced Jesus, but real nonetheless.

Just ask Saint Francis, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, and countless others who have been called to witness to Christ many centuries after his resurrection.

We also know that the transformation that the Holy Spirit works in our lives is not instantaneous.

Just as it took Michelangelo many blows of the hammer to sculpt his famous statue of David, it will take many encounters with Christ and much letting go on our part to effect our conversion.

There will be times when we feel as if we are making no progress and other times when we think we are going backwards.

It will often not be given to us to see where the road leads or enjoy the finished product.

But I suspect that the forging forward in hope toward the unseen promise is part of the transformation itself.

There is much comfort in knowing that God is not done with us yet.

We are his handiwork, each of us a masterpiece on which he is willing to spend his time and energy.

God never fails to find something beautiful in us and never grows weary of endeavoring to draw it out.

We need only allow him to stop us in the middle of our journey, let him into our boat, and invite him into our daily work.

Then the adventure can begin.