

A Gold Standard for BEing and DOing

For we "Christ & the Workplace" types, we probably share a common standard from Scripture to guide and inspire us. It is Luke 5: 1-11, about the miraculous catch of fish. Whether we are a student, unemployed, employed for pay, a spouse/parent at home, or do volunteer work, this story applies to each of us. Following is a review of its highlights and relevance.

Jesus was on the shore of Lake Gennesaret. He had been invited to talk to a crowd about God. While meeting them, Jesus saw fishermen by their boats, working. They seemed frustrated; it had been a long night, and there was no catch. Point: not everyone can gather for worship when and as the crowd did. Jesus knows and understands this. More important, he does something about it.

As the crowd grew larger, Jesus asked Peter to take him out on the lake, presumably, so his voice would project best. That way, the crowd could hear him better. Point: Jesus related and spoke comfortably with the fishermen. He understood their needs, feelings and workplace culture.

As Jesus spoke, Peter - sitting next to him - would have at least heard him. After Jesus spoke, he turned his attention to the fishermen. He said, in effect: "Look, I know you're tired, and you know what you're doing. But, I have an idea. How 'bout casting your nets in the deep water, where fish often like to gather and settle. Besides, what have you got to lose?" Point: Peter was at least open to what Jesus was saying, however tired or skeptical he may (not) have been. He put aside his pride, instincts and experience to listen to this... "landlubber."

The fishermen did as Jesus suggested. They caught so many fish, the boat almost sank! Point: This is not magic. Rather, Jesus inspired the fishermen to make one more try. It was the fishermen who did the work and achieved the result. Jesus and they did what the fishermen did not do on their own.

So What?

There are no boundaries on Jesus' presence or ministries. Whether we gather in worship - as the crowd did, or are working - as the fishermen were, Jesus is present. He cares about our BEings and what we DO. He wants to bless us as we live and work.

When we are at our limits, Jesus' insights, ideas, strengths and encouragement are perfected. Point: Again, this is not magic. Rather, we still do the work, but we have divine inspiration to work with!

I think that Luke the Physician, who wrote this story, is trying to tell us: when we are trying hard, but getting nowhere, Jesus will help us be happier, less stressed, be more at peace and more productive as we turn to him. Point: Luke the Physician knows of what he speaks. And he does so with the inspiration and conviction of Jesus.

There is a tendency in our workplace cultures to compartmentalize. We work. We live. We worship. We Play. We 'be' with our families, etc. Everything is separate and tidy. (Scream!) We may live that way, but Jesus invites us not to. He wants to BE and DO with us, so that our lives and work may be blessed with peace, fulfillment (ie., meaning and balance), well-being and productivity.

Finally, I also hear Luke prodding us to try for our lives what his story is saying. He reminds us that Jesus, too, was and is a worker, who knows our needs and feelings. Jesus will make a difference in our lives and work...as we try to be attentive to him, as Peter was. We can practice attentiveness by (re)reading Luke's story and praying as we do. Then, look out! Expect God to do something. God will do...*infinitely more than we can ask for or imagine* (St. Paul's triumphant prayer of thanksgiving, and St. Peter's workplace experience).

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