

SERMON  
 First Lutheran Church  
 Aitkin, Minnesota  
 February 10, 2013

Psalm 138  
 Luke 5:1-11  
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen

### **ADULT MESSAGE**

It was just a couple of weeks ago when **Medina Pendleton** traveled with her high school classmates from Chicago to Washington D.C. to help our country celebrate all that this land of liberty is about. She and her friends performed in the **Inaugural Parade for President Barrack and Michelle Obama**. This Saturday, back in Chicago, **Michelle Obama attended Medina's funeral**. Medina was killed in a mistaken-identity drug shooting. I am sure that God grieves all of America's violent deaths right along with us. Is there any hope for change?

Our four scripture lessons for today all offer examples of people's lives not necessarily being in the place that God would like them to be. **Isaiah** was a man of unclean lips living among a people of unclean lips. I don't know, do you suppose unclean lips mean gossip, taking the Lord's Name in vain, lying...? Whatever it was, Isaiah knew that he wasn't worthy to be in the presence of God. Then we have our **psalmist**. He is in some sort of trouble, has some enemies and is calling out for God's saving rescue. The **Apostle Paul** confesses to having been a Christian killer. Paul was a Jewish religious zealot who literally hunted down Christians to bring them in to be stoned to death. Finally we have **Simon - later called Peter**. He is a professional fisherman whose luck has been poor. He and his partners have no fish to sell after a long night of fishing. Both customers and business men may go hungry this day... Enough bad luck and you lose your business...

In each of these four cases, **God intervenes to bring about a new thing**. God calls less-than-perfect folks to walk with him into God's new kingdom. First God moves to help change the lives of the individuals and then God moves through them to help to change the world around them.

**Isaiah** gets clean lips and a Godly word to share. The **psalmist** gets the strength to go on and is saved from his troubles. **Paul** gets a change of heart and literally starts inviting people to join him in following Jesus. And

Peter is shown how his old, God-given fishing talents can be used in a new, more powerful way to bring people to Christ.

Do you see? God comes into our lives and calls us to trust in God despite the brokenness of our world. And God heals us despite the sickness that rages all about. And then God empowers us to join Jesus in bringing forgiveness, healing, hope and life to all of the other hurting people we encounter – one person at a time.

Eight hundred years before the time of Christ, our in-trouble psalmist says, **“You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.”**

There is our best starting point when the bottom seems to be falling out of our world:

- God has a plan for our lives and for our world.
- God is working to carry out that plan.
- God’s plan is guided by God’s now-and-forever love for us.
- God created and continues to shape us.
- God will not give up on us or on our world.

One little verse says all of this about our God. **“You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.”**

That was the story eight hundred years before Jesus. The same was true in Isaiah’s day and in Paul and Peter’s day. The same is true for you and me today.

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The problem is, however, that we either **don’t believe** that God is involved in our lives or else we just **keep forgetting** that God is there for us. That’s why Jesus was preaching from the boat he borrowed. That’s why Jesus showed Peter that our own best efforts and intentions can never match what can happen when we let God walk with us. That’s why Jesus invited Peter to come along as Jesus went about the business of sharing God’s plan with every person in this world. That’s why we’re here today. God has a plan for our lives. God wills to draw us closely to God self and to

each other. God wills for us to live in a love/trust relationship with God and with each other.

How must God feel about the **terrible things** that happen in our lives and world? How must God feel when we manage, even just a little, to relate to the people around us with **love and grace, compassion and forgiveness, generosity and encouragement**? Will our world change? Maybe, maybe not. But the person we are relating to may change... **Good things will happen if Jesus has his way...**

How can we stop hatred and violence? Gun laws? Hire more police? Arm the teachers? Hire more mental health professionals? Punish bullying? Build bigger prisons? Stand together as a village that deeply cares about the welfare of our kids? Strengthen our investment in education for every person? Is there some other answer?

What is God's plan for our world? What is God's plan for your life?

The American dream has something to do with the **pursuit of life, liberty and happiness**. My parents' generation dreamed of giving their kids a **better life** than they themselves had experienced. Everyone has been working so hard to "**get ahead.**" **Lately it hasn't been working...** What is a "**better life?**"

Do you trust God? Are you trying to follow Jesus? Is God at work shaping you as a person? Is God at work through you in shaping our world? Isaiah, the psalmist, Peter and Paul **all had trouble in their lives, in their faith and in their world.** That didn't stop God. There is not a person sitting here today that perfectly trusts and follows Jesus. That won't stop God.

Jesus went to die on a cross so that we could forever see how much God loves us, loves you... Won't let you go...

When you face the **insane gunman...** When your **family van is sinking** beneath the freezing waters of Lake Minnetonka... When your hear **fire crackling overhead in the attic** of your house ... When your doctor says, "**Its cancer...**" When your boss says, "There's going to be a **downsizing...**" When your spouse says, "**We can't go on like this anymore...**" When you find **stolen prescription drugs** in your teenager's car...

- Will your television save you?
- Will your computer pull you through?
- Will your deer rifle solve your problems?
- Will a few more drinks calm your nerves?
- Will you be able to move forward on your own?

Twenty eight hundred years ago, a psalm writer, in some sort of trouble, wrote words of **thanksgiving** to God for being present in his life. Then he said that **God is king of everything**. And he concluded that he was going to **continue to trust God** to love and care for him. That ancient believer said, **“You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.”**

How tough are things in our world? How tough are things in your own life? **Are you on your own**? No. **Is Jesus there for you**? Yes. So, the only question may be, **“Will I trust and follow Jesus in my world?”** Today my answer is “yes.” I hope that it will be “yes” for me every day.

**Does Jesus love and care for me**? Today God's answer is **“yes.”** And, if the cross is any kind of an example, Jesus' answer will **always be “yes.”** **Help us to love, trust and follow you Lord. And please save the children...** Thanks be to God. Amen.