

Another Chance

Isaiah 6:1-8

Luke 5:1-11

February 4, 2007 Stanford Memorial Church

Both of the Bible readings we heard today are about people who were given another chance. Isaiah was given a chance to speak for God and the disciples were given a chance to fish in a new way. In both of the stories the invitation frightened them. I believe one response to being given a choice or a chance is to be afraid because it means we might have to change and see life differently. But these stories seem too big to be ours.....I mean really TWO BOAT LOADS of fish....that's a fishing story!

But even if we are not given a whole boat of fish, I believe we are also given another chance.

Rachel Remen describes this well in her book My Grandfather's Blessings: "Finding meaning does not require us to live differently: it requires us to see our lives differently. Many of us already live far more meaningful lives than we know. When we go beyond the superficial to the essential, things that are familiar even commonplace are revealed in new ways.

Meaning may change the way we see ourselves and the world.

Through illness, people may come to know themselves for the first time and recognize not only who they genuinely are but also what really matters to them. " (page 29)

Today in this service we are reminded that we share a common commitment to what really matters, we have common ground....we have a commitment to baptism, to gathering in community to share our faith and hope.

I work here at Memorial Church but I also work at the children's hospital. There I meet with children and their families who do not know me and so we need to find some common ground. In the hospital that often begins with hope. So the chaplains placed decorated Boxes of Hopes throughout the Children's Hospital. Packard Children's Hospital is a special place for hope and healing and these boxes are a reminder of that. Small cards with My Hope Or Mi Esperanza are with the boxes, so children, their families and staff can share their hopes or reach into a box and find a hope when they need it. Some of the hopes written include:

I hope my brother's cancer is cured;

Mi esperanza es un dia con bueno noticias (My hope is for a day with good news);

My hope is that my cat has healthy kittens;

My hope is that all mothers take their children to the park to play:

I hope my baby sister gets to grow up;

My hope is that parents find strength.

When hopes are fulfilled, they become thanksgivings and this too is a common ground in the hospital.

In fact when we speak of giving thanks or gratitude we are often speaking of grace. Do you know what grace is?

Grace is something we cannot go out and get---it is given. We never learned it, earned it, deserved it, bought it or brought it about---it just is.

Another minister (Fred Buechner) described grace this way: "A good sleep is grace and so are good dreams. Most tears are grace. The smell of rain is grace. Somebody loving you is grace. Loving somebody is grace.....The grace of God means something like: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you. There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too." (pages 33-34)

Today is a day to remember such gifts and to remember we too are offered a second chance.... We are given grace.

The sacrament of baptism is a reminder of another chance as well.

As we promise to support and cherish these people being baptized today we remember that when we were baptized, others promised to support and cherish us. Each time we witness a baptism we are given another chance to know we are loved and we are called just like the disciples were called and we are invited to be different or to see differently.

We do this when we say I love you, or share with others or do the right thing. We are given another chance to join with the prophet and say “Here am I send me” or to join with the disciples and follow Jesus and his way of love.

As you go back to be with your families, I want to give you a hope bookmark....so when you get home, you can tell your parents what your hopes are and write them on it.

My hope is that you know and they know that God says to you: I cherish you and call you and give you another chance.