



Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

6 February 2021

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio--seeking to know and serve Christ in loving service to the campus, the community, and the world.

The Lessons

Lessons for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany: Isaiah 6: 1-8; Psalm 138; I Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11.

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



Luke 5:1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When

he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their

partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

The Sermon

It's Not About the Fish

"What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on sort of person you are." This is a quote from one of the books in C.S. Lewis' fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia* titled *The Magician's Nephew*. It's a story of how the land of Narnia was created and the doorways between Narnia and our world were established. The quote comes from the part of the story where Aslan, the Great Lion and – spoiler alert- Jesus, was creating Narnia from nothing. No matter how old or young you are, there is something imaginatively delightful about Lewis' description of Aslan singing the land, the trees, and the animals into being. Aslan was not alone when he created Narnia; he was watched by several people from our world, who got there by magic. This magic was discovered by a man from London named Uncle Andrew, who is one of the story's villains. What made Uncle Andrew a bad guy was he was selfish; he lied and manipulated children to do what he was afraid to do and suffered from delusions of grandeur, thinking himself a much wiser and nobler character than he was.

As Lewis described the creation of Narnia, he let us see the events from the perspectives of the children who were there and from Uncle Andrew. The children felt safe, even though they were in a world they had never known and watching events they could hardly understand. They experienced awe and wonder. Uncle Andrew watched from a distance because he was afraid and selfish. He saw the animals Aslan created and gifted with speech as creatures that would get in the way of him exploiting the land of Narnia to make him wealthy and famous.

While the children saw beauty and wonder and heard laughter and joy, Uncle Andrew saw a threat and heard violent cries from the animals. Lewis summed up this difference in perspective by writing, "What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are."

This quote could also apply to how we read the Bible. It is not easy to read the Bible without our preconceived biases and prejudices influencing what we see. Take, for example, today's Gospel reading where Jesus was near a large lake, and so many people were surrounding him, he had to get into a boat and push out into the water to be heard. The way the sound moves over water created a natural amplifier. So, Jesus didn't do a miracle, he used the natural resources available to him. The author of the Gospel didn't tell us what Jesus taught, only that when he was finished teaching, he told the fishermen whose boat he was in to go fishing again, this time in deeper waters. The fishermen were tired and grumpy from working all night, which by the way was the common practice for local fishing industries in that time and place because that was when the fish were more likely to be caught. Yet, despite all their hard work doing what

they always did, they hadn't caught a single fish. Still, they did as Jesus said, and that is when a miracle occurred: so many fish they had to get the other fishermen in the other boat to help them and both boats almost sank from the weight of all those fish. The ridiculous amount of fish impressed Simon, who by the way is the same person as Peter before Jesus changed his name, that he exclaimed he was not worthy of such abundance and generosity. Then Jesus issued another command, saying that Simon needed to stop fishing for fish and fish for people, after which Simon and the other fishermen left everything to follow Jesus.

For many commentators, the most impressive or important part of this story is all those fish. So many fish the boats almost sank from the weight of them. Many a sermon has been preached about catching people like so many fish, people that will fill up the pews of churches to overflowing and fill up the collection plates to give church members a feeling of security about meeting budgets. But what if that interpretation comes from a perspective of fear? Fear of the church losing status in society, fear of losing money, fear that leads to seeing people as resources to be used for gain or security instead of beloved children of God.

What if we looked at it from a different perspective, one that, like the people in today's Gospel, can see those fish for what they were: a miracle that points to who Jesus is. The abundance of fish did not make the fishermen rich beyond their wildest dreams. The abundance of fish did not make the fishermen celebrities who wrote books on how to be the best fishermen. The fish were not really for the benefit of the fishermen. The fish pointed to the wider community beyond the boats, nets, and lake. There was more than enough fish for lots of people, not just for one day, but for many days. The abundance of fish points to the truth that there is a world bigger than the lake out there.

This might make us ask, if this event in the Gospel isn't about the fish, what is it about? Maybe it's about the waters. When Jesus told the fishermen to go back to work at a time of day when there wasn't supposed to be any good fishing, he told them to fish in deep waters. To go where they were not used to fishing. To try something different, something out of their comfort zone and not routine. Perhaps those deep waters represent the parts of the world that reveal life is more complex than we assume, where solutions are rarely easy, wherever we find ourselves out of our comfort zones; where things aren't so certain, and the way we've always done things just doesn't work like it used to.

Maybe it isn't about the fish. Maybe it is about the deep waters.

During the season of Epiphany, the Church helps us by challenging us to look beyond our preconceived biases and prejudices to deepen our understanding of Jesus. To look at the events in the Gospels and see how Jesus manifests God incarnate, God with us.

To the fisherman cleaning their nets after a bad night of hard work and nothing to show for it, Jesus revealed God is with them by challenging them to go deeper. Not to get more fish, but to recognize their failed work didn't mean God had abandoned them nor was God punishing them for some sin. God was with them, even when their work didn't pay.

In its fear and grief, the church can mistake shrinking attendance and money for punishment too. Religious magazines and secular newspapers alike are full of opinion articles blaming clergy, blaming laypersons, blaming institutions, blaming the sins of the Church for its shrinking status in a growing secular society. And it is easy to get on the

bandwagon of despair. I'm not saying the church is innocent of causing harm. Far from it. We need to name the harm our fears and hurt can and have caused as individuals, a parish, an institution and confess, and repent. This is not easy; it takes courage, and it takes faith, like it did for Simon.

Which is why there is so much hope for everyone in today's Gospel. Jesus didn't abandon the fishermen, nor did he criticize them for not paying attention when he was teaching. Instead, he showed them God was with them by challenging them to go deeper. This frightened them, and it can be frightening when God calls us beyond our comfort zone, to consider doing things differently, to figure out how to balance tradition and adapting to the changes in the world. Yet, in those deep waters of uncertainty, God is there too. Jesus didn't send the fishermen out alone he went with them, not to punish them, but to show them the wonders of God's love.

God is still with us, perhaps manifesting in the very challenges we face as the pandemic continues, as our neighborhood changes, and our parish changes. We can choose to see these challenges as punishment, or as Jesus calling us to go deeper with him into the love of God, which may take us to unexpected places. This revelation might give us courage to look for additional ways to reach out to our neighbors, to explore new ways to raise the necessary resources we need for our ministries, and in all these see that we are not alone, God is with us. It all depends on our point of view.



[Watch a video version of Mother Deborah's Sermon HERE.](#)

The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, a Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February, 2022

Please include in your prayers

In our world, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray also for the people who are suffering from war, especially all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

In our diocese, In our diocese, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops. We pray for the National Guard being deployed to help with the coronavirus.

In our parish, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, Rev. Katharin Foster and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community. We pray for our friends at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Merida, Mexico.

Those Whom our Prayers are Requested: Belle, Bill S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Elena, Gloria R., Gordon, Jan S, Lacey, Land and baby Risponse, Laura, Miriam, Sharon, Bill, Annie and Kathleen, Tommy, Jeannet Barratt, Danny Cain, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Glinnis Davies, Dick Dean, Phyllis Dean, Richard DeNune, Caryl Docherty, Chris Eaton, Ben Foster, Norm Fox, Jan Gault, Jennifer Hall, Susanne Hill, Debbie Hunsberger, Nancy and Bob Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Monya Monroe, Julie Nehls, Linda Nippert, Lauren O'Brien, Doug and Michelle Parsons, Jane Patton, Dale Paul, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Ann Shelly, Sandy Spades, Michael Vaughn, Consuelo Walker and family, Benjamin Woolsey, Emily Woolsey, Zita Zolpys, and we pray for all who care for them. **

Birthdays: Michael Wootton (2/11)

** Full names for this section are normally not published online but since there is not a printed Sunday Bulletin or in-house 10:30 service, for the time being we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

Music

Music for February 6, Epiphany 5 – year C 2022

Prelude – [Chorale prelude on “Ebenezer”](#) (Hymn 381) Healey Willan

[Gloria - S280](#)

Offertory Hymn – Hymnal 381 [“Thy strong word did cleave the darkness”](#)

[Sanctus - S130](#)

Communion Music -- [“Largo”](#) Antonio Vivaldi

Postlude -- [Chorale Prelude on “How bright appears the Morning Star”](#) Max Drischner

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Candle Blessing

This Little Light, Let it Shine!



Candle Blessing

Gracious God, the source and creator of light, who revealed to Simeon and Anna the Light which enlightens the whole world, dispel the darkness of our souls and brighten the path that lies before us. Pour out your blessing upon these candles which will illumine this church, our chapel, and our homes, that we who kindle them may come at last to stand in thy eternal light; through him who is the light of the world, your Son Jesus Christ

our Lord. Amen. - adapted from St. Augustine's Prayer Book

[Here is a short YouTube video of the Blessing of Candles today.](#)

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams via Vimeo its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched later without having to log in.

<https://vimeo.com/event/4306>

Though the doors of the National Cathedral in Washington are, like ours, temporarily closed, there's much to explore at the the Cathedral's online portal.

<https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Coming Up:

Sunday, February 13, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, February 10, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting, ZOOM

Sunday, February 20, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, February 24, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting

Sunday, February 27, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Notes

Mother Deborah Office Hours Canceled in February

The numbers of new and active cases of COVID-19 are slowly falling in Athens County but are currently still highest they have ever been in our county. Mother Deborah will not have office hours in the month of February, but she can still be reached via phone call, email, text or make an appointment for an in-person meeting.

– Reclaiming Stewardship – Mother Deborah’s Continuing Education for 2022

Part of every parish priest’s compensation is to provide funds and time for them to further their education. There are usually no parameters on how or what this will look like. This year, Mother Deborah is participating in a 6-month one day a week via video conference program that seeks to “shift the mindset and practice of fundraising from a series of transactional requests for money to a deeper, more meaningful transformational experience of giving.” This interactive program is designed for campus ministries and parishes located in university campuses and is being funded by a grant from Province V.

Church of the Good Shepherd is not the only parish in the diocese nor the national church to experience a decline in giving since the 1980’s and 90’s. The wider culture and society is shifting and changing and this program seeks to help move from complaining about the shift/change to empowering us to learn to ask for money as part of ministry. Ministries like the Brent House in Chicago have already benefited from this type of stewardship. Vestry can look forward to hearing about what Mother Deborah learns about herself, the parish, and how we can improve upon our financial health so that we can continue to grow our ministry to our neighbors. Want to learn more? Send Mother Deborah an email or call her, she will be happy to share what she is learning with everyone.

**In case you missed it,
information regarding the
Parish Annual Meeting
last Sunday can be found
[HERE](#) (Friday Bulletin Feb 4).**

Volunteers Needed to Help with Sunday Services

Counter

We need your help counting the financial gifts given during the church service. All you have to do is stay a few minutes after the church service on Sundays and count the money collected during the service, fill out a form stating what you counted, then put the money in a pouch and put the pouch in the closet in the church office. Time: it will take approximately 15 minutes to accomplish. How often you are asked to do it depends on how many people volunteer. Volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com

Greeter

We need your help greeting people when they enter the church for the service. All you have to do is arrive 10 minutes before the church service starts, stand or sit by the door or on the porch, warmly greet people as they enter, remind them to put their mask on if they forgot or offer them one of our free masks, and answer any questions like where the bathrooms are if they ask. Once everyone has arrived, you have no other duties. How often you are asked to do this depends on how many people step up to volunteer, all volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com Thank you for your help, it is by working together that we can offer in-person Sunday morning church services.



The freezing rain ice on the trees was spectacular against today's rare clear blue sky.

The squirrel whose undoubtedly cold little paws made these tracks was out and about looking for walnuts it had buried before the snow storm. Note that the hind feet land in front of the front feet as it hops about, like a rabbit..

The squirrel's nest is that dark brown spot center/right on the oak tree.



Contacts, Information

Quick Links

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and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese S Ohio](#)

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[Episcopal
News Service](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for returning to in-person worship](#)

As of August 5 the Diocese COVID Guidelines request all persons wear masks inside the church building regardless of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.,
Monday through Thursday.
Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office/CrossRoads hours the **thrift shop** and **chapel** are available for individuals.
Masks are required.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Ted Foster, Junior Warden, at 740-593-8615 or by e-mail at foster.theodore@gmail.com. **For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877). The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
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DONATE to Good Shepherd

This takes you to the Parish Home page where you can donate on-line via PayPal. If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday

Masks are required.
