

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Year C

RCL

- [Isaiah 6:1-8, \[9-13\]](#)
- [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#)
- [Luke 5:1-11](#)
- [Psalm 138](#)

In 2014, Marie Kondo's book, *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying up* was released in the US. She's back in the news with her hit show on Netflix called *Tidying up with Marie Kondo* which many of you may have seen. For those that haven't, the show follows people in different stages of life; all of them desperately seeking to reclaim their homes and lives from their "stuff". One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel and especially in the call stories of the disciples, is to leave everything to follow Jesus. Luke stresses detachment from possessions and Marie Kondo has created a business around what many spiritual teachers, Luke included, have tried to get across for centuries. When we leave behind distractions, we can know with clarity our true priorities. In the episodes available, she arrives to a person's home. She walks through the home room by room and offers the gentlest of pushes for those who live there to reflect on their lives. They pull everything out from one category and put it together- clothes, shoes, decorations, and so on. She then asks, does this item spark joy? Deep doubt and questioning arise. They can choose to follow her method or not - and we see the results. By releasing the stuff, the things, the possessions, she hopes people can find fulfillment in their lives.

Just like the Biblical call stories, it feels drastic when they set everything aside and follow Jesus. But they're doing what many of us long to do, release the things that no longer serve them.

Call stories have a similar pattern of cleaning house with Marie Kondo. In all of our readings today there is a framework in which God speaks to humans. God arrives to speak to Isaiah, Paul, or Simon. They hear the word or the voice of God in some way. Maybe it's spoken word, maybe it's an image or a dream, maybe a miracle or two, and then there's the reluctance- doubt, questioning. They wonder "why us"? Are they worthy to receive such an amazing gift? In this questioning, they lay out their whole lives bare and take stock. Finally, they turn from their old lives- identity, livelihoods, sometimes even their families, and they follow God.

Now, what happens when you say yes to God? Well, this is where we find the similarities with the Kondo Method and a relationship with God diverge. Because frankly, the results are mixed. Professional organizer Marie Kondo's trademark is to always ask the question, "what sparks joy?" but that's not the way it works for a relationship with God. Yes, we find joy in the Good News of Jesus, and that is to be celebrated, but being with God does not always bring joy. There's more depth and nuance to saying yes to God and discipleship. For God, it's never just a one and done decision, like whether you donate an article of clothing or not. It's a lifelong transition and journey. Just like Jesus' teaching that never really ends in Luke, but rather seems like one long continuous conversation with the crowds, this call process happens again

and again as we grow and change and move closer or farther away from God in different seasons of our lives.

I think many times we hear these great call stories of the heroines and heroes of our faith, and wonder where our huge miraculous moment is- when we put in our nets and bring up so many fish we can't even count after fishing a long night and coming up empty. And sometimes God does speak to us in those ways, but many times, building a relationship happens slowly, with the still, small voice, nudging us. Most things, especially deep and lasting relationships take time. What we don't see today is that Simon knew Jesus. Not just from his popularity evidenced by the crowds, but from a personal encounter. Jesus had come to Simon's house to heal Simon's mother-in-law. And then, they had shared a meal together. So even though Simon still showed some reluctance to Jesus today, he had seen what Jesus was capable of. Little by little Simon came to follow.

After Jesus tells him to not be afraid, something we hear from a myriad of holy figures and angels, and even Jesus himself a number of times, Simon realizes that he was ready to go completely in just as the boats sailed into deep water. He was swamped with an abundance of God's goodness and love. This call and abundance aren't just for those that are apostles, disciples, priests, deacons, or holy people in the church. But rather for all of God's creation. And even more so, this work is not done in isolation, but rather with partners. Instead of being afraid of sinking boats and breaking nets, Simon and the fishermen called out to those with whom they were working. With

God, there is always enough abundance to be shared. This isn't a solo job, and the more we say yes, the more abundance we find in our lives and in relationships with others. It's part of the reason why we come to church regularly- discipleship isn't a solitary venture. But rather to be with a community that can love and care and support each other, and share the abundance God has given us.

There's a reason lifestyle gurus and influencers are popular, just like the crowds pressing in on Jesus, they have millions of followers sharing their wisdom and advice. They do change lives. Think of the "before" and "after" photos they show. But throwing out things, losing 200 pounds, or creating designer meals that are photo worthy don't reach to the heart of the matter. We can change all of those things but still be missing something. Hope, charity, justice, abundance, mercy - Christian virtues that when we say yes to God we also seek to live out in our lives. It makes a difference who or what we follow. How has it made a difference for you to say "yes" to God?