



# ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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**Sunday July 16, 2017 – Trinity V**

*“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken...”*

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

One of the unique challenges of being a parish priest and the father of children is the impact your children can have on your performance in the pulpit or at the altar on Sunday morning. When somebody else's child cries or makes noise, it's rather easy to tune it out. If any of you fellow parents ever wondered if we got annoyed up here because your little one was crying or fussing or throwing prayer books on the floor with a loud bang, the truth is that we're really not. It's easy to tune out, and as Father Guy once said to somebody, “that baby is worshipping God with the only voice it has.”

When it's your own children however, it can wind up being the only sound you hear. And it can grow and grow in your ears until you have no reason to not believe that it's growing and growing in everybody else's ears, and that the whole globe at that moment can hear your kid fussing in the pews. So last Sunday, when Seamus began a meltdown right at the start of Mass, I was hoping he'd calm himself. And despite Alison's most valiant attempts, he kept having a fit for a solid five+ minutes. Before

turning towards the altar to grab the altar book for the deacon, I noticed that Alison had resigned herself to the fact that the baby was in this for the long haul, had stood up to leave for the nursery. When I turned back around though, I saw a most curious sight - Alison attempting to leave, and an earnest looking Colum seemingly trying to give her some advice to the contrary. They seemed quietly locked in debate, and when Colum looked over at me, I made a sideways motion with my hand to tell him to please get out of his mother's way. With a look of quiet resignation, Colum did indeed stop offering Alison his parenting advice and got out of his mother's way so that she could escape to the nursery with an inexplicably furious baby.

And it struck me almost right away how this little event mirrors our own relationship with God. Not only just now, but throughout the history of God's people. Don't forget, when God told Moses that He was going to send him to Egypt to bring the Israelites out of bondage, Moses initially tried to duck out of the job. And even after God had answered all of Moses'

protests and assured him of success and of signs and wonders that he would perform, Moses still begged off of the job by claiming that he wasn't terribly well spoken! Exodus then tells us that "*the anger of the LORD burned against Moses,*" and that after a firm rejoinder from God, that Moses relented.

Likewise, we can't forget Jonah, whom God instructed to go to Nineveh, and call the wicked city to repentance. Jonah instead jumped on a ship to a city called Tarshish, which was anecdotally thought to be at the end of the world. It seems Jonah not only wanted to get as far away from the watchful eye of The Lord as possible, but that he likely thought that the folks of Nineveh *deserved* God's wrath, and that if he didn't call them to repentance, that they'd suffer it indeed. Jonah thought he could micromanage the anger of God to suit his own agenda. As we all know, God put him on the right track, and the job was done, but it took a most circuitous route to get there.

And now, as we fast forward nearly 800 years from Jonah, we find Simon Peter doing his best to humor Jesus, even though he's probably pretty sure there's no real practical point in doing so. If you listen closely to the Gospel reading, you can hear the polite sigh of resignation - "*Master, we've **already** been working on this all night to no avail. But if you say so...*" Simon Peter obeys Jesus not because he necessarily believes that anything supernatural is going to come of it, but merely because his boss said so. Granted, they knew He was the Messiah, but they completely missed the note of divinity therein. Messiah was a charismatic political figure who would become a great military leader and really kick some Roman butt. The fact that Messiah was here to redeem the whole of Creation was entirely lost on them; as such, even the people nearest to Jesus didn't understand that He was the Son of God.

The truth is, we still forget that today. We forget that God is not an executive sitting in an office

with a list of tasks we've done poorly, but we treat him like one. Worse yet, we have some wonderful suggestions for him about how *He* should behave, and are always quick to offer Him some pointers on making a better world. We have a list of our merits, instead of an example of the way we live. When we treat God like He's one of us, we forget that He's an all-loving Creator who expects us to entice people away from the world and toward God. When we forget that, it's easy to treat Jesus the way Simon Peter did; and when we do that, it's easy to miss our own calling. And we're all called - nobody gets a free pass here.

Yes, they did leave their jobs, but to leave all can also be to leave all the worldly mess and worry behind. you don't have to abandon your family and job, but you have to abandon what the world expects, and the worries of the world.

Luke tells us "*when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.*" Although we are all called, it's admittedly not possible for all of us to forsake our jobs and our homes and such. Yes, that is what the disciples did, but to "forsake all" can also mean to forsake the mess and worry of the world. To forsake all doesn't mean to leave your car sitting in the lot and take off on a mission of evangelizing; but it can mean to leave your well-intentioned suggestions to God sitting unsaid in the waste bin. When we are willing to forsake our own hindrances and our own human instinct to forget the divine nature of God, then we are able, even in the human condition, to win souls for God and to bring people home to Him. And when we do that, we open up the window for our own draft of fishes, as Luke tells us: "*And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.*"