



Ravensworth

BAPTIST CHURCH

February 2, 2025 | Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Luke 5:1-11 | *Abundant Lives: Creating Disciples*

Rev. Dr. Leah Grundset Davis, preaching

Nearly 66 years ago, a group of Baptists decided that there was a need for a church in North Springfield/Annandale. And those Baptists gathered and affirmed a few things—that they would worship God, share life together, and commit to a life of missions.

When the idea of Ravensworth Baptist Church first started, before it was called that, the community consisted of four couples committed to this new idea of being church together. Surely at times, the eight of them looked around and thought, “Is this enough? What if we manage the money wrong? What if people don’t come? What if we aren’t meeting the needs of the community?”

Little by little, this church who first met in a home grew, and eventually, formalized. “On March 15, 1959, a formal constitution service was celebrated at North Springfield Elementary School. 54 people (29 families) accepted the invitation to become Christian disciples as members of Ravensworth Baptist Church. From the vision of eight people, came 54 people learning to live and serve God in this community on a plot of land that was brimming with ideas and breaking nets left and right.

They were stewards of the deep work of stewardship—stewardship of the land, the money it took to build the church house, their vision for the neighborhood, and one another.”¹

And we know the rest of the story because we are the rest of the story!

And we sit here today, nearly 66 years later because of their faithfulness, their commitment, their stewardship of calling and place. We make similar promises in the care of this place to everyone who is here now and all who are to come.

We believe that for this season, this place is entrusted to us. We know it existed before us and pray it will exist after us. And because we believe that, we do certain things to live out that belief.

Leading up to our passage for today, Jesus has his inaugural speech in the Gospel of Luke. He’s in his home synagogue, seeing the people who know him as “joseph’s son” and stands up in the middle of the meeting, reading from Isaiah and announces that all he just read had been fulfilled in their hearing. Well, the hometown folks didn’t like this too much and he was chased out of town. He then went to a few other places, healing people, laying his hands on them and preaching all throughout Judea.

By our passage today, he’s taken the show on the road and people know who he is. His events are drawing HUGE crowds. People want to know about this kid from Nazareth who is healing people and talking about the redemption of God.

On this one occasion, as Jesus was standing next to the lake of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, the crowd was just too big. He heard babies crying and more folks were coming down the hill toward the lake. He recognized a few faces, but most were new to him. Until this point, he had more or less been a one-man show, traveling from town to town.

¹ Ravensworth History.

This day however, he saw two boats off in the distance at the shore. The fishermen to whom the boats belonged were out of the boats, washing their empty nets. Jesus climbed into the boat, one belonging to a man named Simon and anchored it off shore a bit so he was able to teach while sitting in the boat.

After he offered his sermon on the boat, he turned to the fishermen who had so kindly lent him the boat, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon, probably wondering why this carpenter thought he was suddenly an expert on fishing, said "Jesus, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. But if you say so, I will lay down the nets."

Luke tells us that they went back out into the deep part of the lake and caught so many fish that their nets were starting to break. Surely, this was good news for the fishermen who were facing an earlier catch of no fish. But as the nets started to break, they asked their partners to come and help them in the deep. Reaching out knowing that the goodness, the depth that awaited them was better understood and contained in partnership. As we're told the boats were so full that they started to sink!

And Simon can hardly believe it, kneeling at the feet of Jesus declaring his unworthiness. And those partners of Simon Peter—James and John, the sons of Zebedee saw the whole thing unfold. Of course, this wasn't really about the fish, Jesus said, this was about catching people.

They left their boats and followed him. Just like that Jesus is no longer a one-man show on the road, but instead he's gathered some partners for the journey. I'm sure he had an idea that deep, dark days were swirling --- remember after all, he had just barely escaped a mob in his hometown.

I've never understood the line about catching people. Because that sounds terrifying to me.

We stand on this side of the story. We read that Jesus sent them into the deep and that they came out in partnership with more than they needed and that

they were physically ok, if not a little bit shaken in their spirits. Jesus has that impact on people.

It's hard for us to imagine what Jesus' call to the deep might have felt like. Or is it? He called Simon Peter and his partners to take their boats out—with the nets they just cleaned, mind you, to the deep waters of the lake.

The deep waters where legends swirled about what was underneath, the deep waters where it was murkier, you couldn't see what was under you and the deeper waters where we've heard a story or two about the winds picking up and storms tossing boats about on the sea.

Rev. Robert Wright says, "Deep water takes faith. Deep water is a risk. The visibility in deep murky water is next to nothing. You've got to trust the words and directions of others who have passed through deep water to make it there. Jesus is always inviting people to the deeper end of things.

But shallow water is pleasant. It tickles our ankles when we walk in it. You can see all the way to the bottom in shallow water. Staying in shallow water is such a temptation—it doesn't cost much; it doesn't take a whole lot of courage. The deep water of faith is where those things we say we believe are swimming around. The shallow is where we begin the adventure, not where we finish."²

This deep water that Jesus called the disciples to also called the disciples to partnership. They had to look at one another for help in the midst of the abundance of work that faced them. They looked to one another with that almost helpless look of, can you believe this? Let's do it.

I think about our callings in some similar ways. Right now, in 2025 in the United States, the Church is called to some deep work, even as we sit in the chaos of the unknown—

- Deep work of interfaith relations and using our voices to support religious liberty,

² Rt. Rev. Robert Wright, "[Why Some People Don't Catch Fish](#)," Day One. Feb. 7, 2010.

- Deep work of racial justice,
- Deep work of caring for immigrants and all who are scared right now,
- Deep work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked
- Deep work of teaching our children that they are beloved because of who they are created to be,
- Deep work of looking for the goodness in one another when everything swirling around us in the chaos tells us to only look for our differences and that we are incompatible
- Deep work of proclaiming the never-ending, always expansive, love of God that we know through Jesus Christ.

RBC is a church that's taken some risks—all the way from 66 years ago, to naming the ways we feel like God is speaking to us, to throwing wide the doors and reminding everyone that they are God's beloved, created child right in this moment. It is that grace that will lead us home.

These practices and beliefs all require risk—swimming into the unknown chaos, but they all produce abundance because Jesus is already there. And I'm not talking about prosperity gospel abundance—I'm talking about, abundance of the goodness of the world that when we listen for the call of God, work together, and give of ourselves, we see nets overflowing with justice, and love, and community.

The temptation is to always look at the first net and say, but there's nothing here. But when we look back to Jesus, if we allow ourselves too, we see him shaking his head over a little bit the other way, throwing wider the doors of the church, wider the dreams in our head, wider and more expansively, what we thought about who and what and where we are called. We do not believe in a gospel of scarcity. We believe in a gospel of abundance.

This is the good news. That as we swim or paddle into the deep waters of the calling of God, where the unknown is swirling, we find partners for the journey and we leave, continuing to follow the one who called us in the first place on the way of peace and love.

May we look to the ever-present love of Jesus Christ who calls us, God our Creator who made us and the Holy Spirit who guides us, today and forevermore. Amen.