

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, February 9, 2025, at St. Michael's Church  
8am and 10 am services  
Sermon by The Reverend Joshua Wong

*Let us pray:*

God, help me to delight in you, and in your word. Line up my heart with yours so that I desire the things that you desire. Help me to trust you more, in both the big things and the little things. Help me to believe that you are working on my behalf.

**Amen.**

Today is the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, and we continue to follow Jesus through his new ministry on earth. Jesus spoke at the Temple and on his first sermon he mentions the Jubilee year. In Jewish culture, the Jubilee year happens every 50 years in which people forgive all financial debts owed to them. The forgiveness of all debt first comes to the poor and the lowly, in order that humanity can become equal and respectful of each other again. Slaves are set free from their debts, and friendships are restored. Jesus speaks about the Jubilee year as a parallel to his mission on earth. For Luke, the mission of Jesus is about serving others, and the willingness to share with those who are poor, lowly and to the captives in society. Jesus brings refreshment and restoration back to humanity. Jesus begins his public teaching with the idea of servanthood, and ends his public ministry about servanthood, first starting with the most vulnerable, and ultimately for the love of the whole world.

Today, Jesus' message still rings true to us. We are to remember the poor, the lowly, the underprivileged, and those who are captives. We are to remember those who don't have the privileges we have.

During this Epiphany season, we see Jesus perform the extraordinary. Jesus turns water into wine, he proclaims that he is the Messiah, and he turns a regular day of fishing into a miracle of harvest. The work of Jesus during this Epiphany season reminds us that we need Jesus' message of love, hope and transformation more than ever before. Many are still hungry for food and meaning, many are being mistreated and forgotten, and more people are desperate from loneliness and fear of the future than before.

We read in today's Gospel that Jesus' popularity is increasing. He had no room to preach by the seaside, and asked Simon to steer offshore to use his boat as his pulpit. When he was finished speaking, he asked Simon a strange request to go out and fish. Jesus knew what he was asking, but Simon corrected Jesus and said, "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." By obeying Jesus, Simon, along with all the other fishermen and multitude of followers witnessed an extraordinary miracle that

showed the power and extravagant generosity of God. Jesus' miracles were performed so that they might believe and have faith.

“Yet if you say so” is the key to this lesson.

During the interaction between Jesus and Simon, there was the brief moment where Simon had to decide whether to trust Jesus or not. We too have those moments, when we need to decide whether to trust Jesus or not. This is the moment of faith. What is God challenging you to trust? What is God challenging our church to trust? This is the same challenge of trust proposed by Bishop Little in his Installation sermon, “Jesus, I don't think I can, but you can.”

Today, after the 10 am service, we will have a brief Annual Church meeting to update us on the health and hopes of the past and coming year at St. Michael's. Please come back or stay for it. There is a potluck directly after, so stay for fellowship. You'll have plenty of time to get home for the Super bowl. I will give a short homily about 2024 and my hopes for 2025. We will also be voting in our new vestry as well. At the Annual meeting, you will get a copy of reports from various ministries that you can take home to read.

“Yet if you say so, I will do it.”

Simon's statement made all the difference. As our faith continues to grow, Jesus will continue to challenge us and our church with the Holy Spirit's guidance. Because Simon trusted, he was able to see first hand the miracle of God. And when we say yes to Jesus, we will see his miracles happen as well. When we say yes, our faith will expand into new territories. Beware, this is different than prosperity theology. Jesus is not our genie, and he is not our Santa Claus. We don't say yes in order to gain personal gain.

Will we follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit even if it seems difficult? Like loving our enemies? Like sacrificing our most precious possessions when God asks of it? Are we going to defend the captive, the innocent, and the marginalized when it is inconvenient in our lives?

Only when Simon said yes, did his faith increase. Jesus asks Simon to take that step of faith, "Yet if you say so" I will do it. May we do the same.

Amen.