

Leonia Presbyterian Church
Sunday, February 9, 2025
5th Sunday after Epiphany, Year C

The Rev. Sarah Segal McCaslin

Sermon Title:
Goldfish Memories

Psalm 138
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5: 1-11

Introduction

Good morning, dear friends. Today, as we gather amidst a mix of emotions, we honor the cherished memories of our beloved pastor while also confronting the uncertainty that lies ahead.

I want to acknowledge and thank you for your commitment to her, her family, and the greater body of Christ. Your dedication speaks volumes about the warmth and love within this community. As we step into this season of transition, it's natural to feel fear and uncertainty. But remember, God sees, understands, and walks with us through these moments.

In moments such as these, it's natural for feelings of trepidation to surface. We may find ourselves asking: **How do we navigate this season of transition? What does it mean for us as individuals and as a congregation?** It is here, within the very fabric of these questions, that we discover the wisdom and comfort of God's Word.

Let us focus on Luke 5:1-11, a passage that speaks to the complexities of human experience and the boundless potential of faith. In this narrative, we encounter Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen, who, despite a long and fruitless night of fishing, are instructed by Jesus to cast their nets into the deep waters once more.

This exchange highlights the tension we often face between our perceived limitations and the transformative power of trusting in God's wisdom. As Jesus encourages Simon to venture beyond the shallows of fear and doubt, we are reminded of our own "deep water" moments when we must choose between remaining in uncertainty or embracing faith.

As a congregation navigating the search for a new pastor and facing the unpredictability of the present moment, we are called to step into the deeper waters of faith. By acknowledging our vulnerability and relying on God's providence, we open ourselves to new possibilities and growth that would otherwise remain hidden.

Simon's response to Jesus – his willingness to listen and try again – invites us to reflect on our own spiritual journeys. We, too, encounter moments when we must choose between remaining in the shallows of fear and doubt or venturing into the unknown depths of faith.

In this passage, we discover a teachable moment where the limits of human understanding intersect with the boundless potential of faith. As we embrace our own "deep water" moments, we learn to trust in God's wisdom and open ourselves to the transformative power of divine guidance.

Subway Story

Now, let us turn our attention to a heartwarming children's book titled "Subway Story" by Julia Sarcone-Roach...

[Pause for reading the story from the hard copy edition]

Just as the subway train faced uncertainty and fear, we too encounter moments where we find ourselves in uncharted waters. But what if **these uncertain times hold the promise of unexpected transformation?** The empty nets of Peter can be seen as a symbol of our own moments of doubt and weariness – times when we are unsure of what the future holds.

However, we can find assurance in the knowledge that God isn't done with us yet. If we trust in God and follow in faith, we can leave the safety of the shallows and venture into deeper waters with Jesus. It is in these depths that we discover new life, new possibilities, and the potential for transformation beyond our wildest dreams.

As we draw inspiration from both Scripture and this charming tale, let us embrace our own "Subway Story" moments – those opportunities for growth and transformation that arise from venturing into the unknown.

Psalm 138

As we gather here today, we carry with us a myriad of emotions—the bittersweet farewell to our cherished pastor, uncertainty about the future leadership of our congregation, and concerns about the state of the world around us. We live in a time marked by unpredictability, where the actions of our nation's leaders can cast a shadow of fear over our immigrant, queer, and Black and brown neighbors. This sense of unease can weigh heavily upon us, even as we strive to fulfill our daily responsibilities and find meaning in our lives.

In these trying times, let us turn to the enduring wisdom of Psalm 138. The psalmist's heartfelt expression of gratitude for God's deliverance from trouble reminds us of the eternal love and faithfulness that sustain us, even in our darkest hours. As we navigate our fears and uncertainties, we can take solace in these ancient words: "When I walk into the thick of trouble, keep me alive in the angry turmoil... Finish what you started in me, God. Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now."

This powerful message reassures us that, despite the chaos and upheaval around us, God's presence remains steadfast and true. In times of turmoil, may we find strength in our collective resolve to persevere, united in our commitment to care for one another and stand with those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

Beloved congregation, remember the gifts of love, grace, and resilience that have carried you through past challenges. Draw upon these gifts as you discern the next steps for your community, and let the wisdom of Psalm 138 guide you as you seek to create a world where compassion, justice, and peace prevail.

As we prepare to embark on this new chapter together, let us hold fast to the lessons imparted to us through Scripture and the heartening story of Subway. Just as Jesus invited Simon Peter to venture into the deep, unexplored waters, we too are being called to trust in the divine presence that sustains us through the unknown.

In times of uncertainty and change, let us find solace in the wisdom of Psalm 138, which reminds us of God's eternal love and faithfulness. As we navigate our fears and doubts, let us lean into the divine presence and draw strength from the gifts of love, grace, and resilience that have carried us through past challenges.

Together, let us embrace this opportunity for growth and discovery,
knowing that the same Spirit that guided and empowered the disciples is at
work within our congregation. As we entrust ourselves to God's care, may we
find courage, wisdom, and strength to face the uncertainties that lie ahead.

In closing, let us remember that the transformative power of faith is
revealed when we embrace our "deep water" moments and step forward in
trust. May we find hope and encouragement in the knowledge that God's love
and guidance will carry us through, leading us to new depths of understanding
and compassion.