



**Empty Hands**  
January 24, 2024  
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*“And immediately they left their nets and followed him.”* ~~ Mark 1:18

In Mark’s gospel, when Jesus calls the fishermen to follow him, their response is immediate and drastic: they completely let go of life as they knew it to start something new with him. That was risky and scary.

Jesus rarely challenges us to make such life altering decisions when calling us to a new ministry. Yet any kind of change means a letting go of something else. Dragging their nets with them wouldn’t have helped Simon and Andrew as disciples. They needed new tools; the old nets would have gotten in the way.

The same is true for us. Sometimes we have to let go of our nets, even when they are full of good fish. We have to leave what we think is working, because the familiar may be blinding us to something better God has in store. It’s not until we empty our hands that God is able to put new blessings in them.

What are our nets? As individuals, perhaps it is a position you have served in for many years or a mission project you’ve assisted with. On a personal level, it might be something that is already a part of your New Year’s resolutions for 2024. For congregations, a net may be a much-loved event or practice that is hard to maintain now. It may be the church building itself. We need to let go of the old concepts of church, with a full-time pastor, packed sanctuary, lots of kids around, etc. As part of the Transition, the Presbytery, too, will look at our nets – concepts, assumptions, past practices – to determine what can be let go in order to have empty hands ready to be filled with God’s new blessings.

In the Christmas classic, “A Charlie Brown Christmas”, there is the wonderful scene where Linus tells Charlie Brown what Christmas really means by reciting Luke 2. Charles Schultz included in that a tiny detail with profound meaning. When Linus narrates the angel telling the shepherds to “Fear not!”, he drops his blanket. Linus, who is *never* without his security blanket, lets it go. Just as the shepherds don’t need to be afraid, in this, neither does he.

We can let go of our nets, drop our blankets, empty our hands without being afraid. God who loves us, Jesus who made the Way, and the Holy Spirit who is always with us, have a good and blessed future in store for us.

Grace and Peace.

*Lisa*

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