

INTO THE DEEP
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Transfiguration of Our Lord Sunday
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

Luke 5:1-11

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

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I'm not absolutely sure but I'm pretty sure that "catching people" in this gospel lesson (Luke 5:1-11) means drawing others into the new community, into the Body of Christ, which is to say, into the community of the Beloved. It also could mean drawing more of yourself out of the unconscious world and into the light of love. Just how we do that is something to be learned in the school of love. Along the path of discipleship there's much to learn.

This morning I am inviting you to begin the practice of "examen" for the first time or to begin again if you once did but have since stopped. It's nearly as simple as brushing your teeth. And like brushing your teeth it won't do you much good unless you do it daily, at the beginning and end of each day. It's that simple and takes about that long. No, it won't make a big difference overnight but over time it brings certain benefits—not brighter teeth, but brighter eyes, ears and hearts. You learned to brush your teeth long ago and have managed to keep it up all these years. You can learn examen as well.

If the guidelines (at end of this script) are too complicated or wordy for you, you can simplify it. Experiment until you find a method that works for you. For example, in the morning visualize the people and challenges you expect to meet that day. Then utter this prayer: *Help, help, help*. In the evening before retiring, re-collect your day and say: *Thank you, thank you*.

It can help to jot down a few observations such as pleasant surprises or unexpected grace in the face of anticipated fears or challenges. You might also recall and record a certain place or thing, a creature or feature of the earth that stood out for you. You can use an inexpensive composition notebook as your daily log.

You learned to brush your teeth long ago and have managed to keep it up all these years. You can learn examen also. Of course, when you start you might be like the fishermen in this gospel story—a little skeptical and a little grumpy.

They had toiled all night and came up empty. They washed and folded their nets the way some of us fold up our lives and call it quits because we're convinced the sea is empty, we've seen all there is to see, heard all there is to hear, learned all there is to learn. The day is over. Not much happened. Or so we think.

And then Jesus got into their boat, the way Jesus gets into our lives. He asked for a little help, just a little shove to get the boat off the shore line a ways. Sure, we say, we can do that. That's easy. We can help Jesus out a little as long as he's not asking too much. We can be nice even tolerant up to a point. That's easy.

And then just when we think we've done our duty Jesus asks for something more. This time he's asking for more than a little shove. He's asking us to push out into the deep and let down our nets again. But we'd rather not because we've been there and done that. We've seen and heard it all and there's nothing more to catch. We know more than Jesus.

Then we remember we are students in the school of love and Jesus, not us, is the Master. As Bob Dylan put it: *you gotta serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord; but you gotta serve somebody.* Of course many of us have a better idea: we'd rather serve ourselves and nobody or nothing else. Good luck. From what I can tell, the self is the harshest tyrant of all, demanding and unforgiving. It's a post-Enlightenment, modern delusion to think there is great freedom in serving our own self. Beware.

Perhaps we've forgotten that we are baptized and that somewhere along the way we decided to follow Jesus and let him be our Master. Jesus is the Master. We are the apprentices. And so we begrudgingly go out into the deep water and let down our nets. And WOW. What a discovery. Abundance where we thought there was nothing.

In other words, you don't have to go to the other side of the moon, or the other side of the world, you don't have to go to new people and places, you simply have to go where you always go but this time with Jesus, which is to say, with Love. And when you do you begin to see in people and places things you've never noticed before.

And that's what examen can do for you. Not overnight but eventually. It will open your eyes, ears and heart to be and to live more deeply in your world.

So, I invite you to take up the practice of examen even if you do it begrudgingly for a while. Try it for Lent and see what happens. And if you don't mind, let me know from time to time what you discover about yourself and the world you inhabit.

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EXAMEN

In God we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28

Spend a few moments of prayerful reflection on your life, experience, and the presence of Love at the beginning and end of each day.

1. Thanksgiving--God, everything, including myself, is a gift from you. Looking at my life today, for what things am I most grateful?
2. Intention--God, open my eyes and ears to be more honest with myself. At this moment, what is the true state of my heart? What is my deepest desire for myself at this time in my life?
3. Examination--God, show me what has been happening to me and in me this day. In what ways have I experienced your love? Where have I experienced difficulty? Where have I failed to respond to or offer your love to myself or others? What or who do I fear?
4. Hope--God, let me look, with you, with longing toward the future. What is your invitation to me in the coming day?
5. Rest in God's love. Give thanks.