

## **“Open or Nope?”**

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February 9, 2025

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

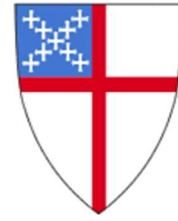
- How does a retail store let you know when it's open?
  - The answer to this question has changed a bit
  - The other day I tried to meet Wyatt at a breakfast place in the Raytown area and looked at Google to confirm that it was open, but it was closed.
  - The old fashioned way is to have an "Open" sign
  - Usually a neon thing that's red and blue
- Some stores have a different type of sign
  - Especially cute hipster stores
  - Once I saw a store front with four big letters in the window, each on its own placard, spelling O-P-E-N
  - I thought it looked neat and creative, but it wasn't till I went by that same store late in the evening that I saw how clever it was.
  - When they closed up they had simply moved the letter N from the end to the beginning, so that now it spelled N-O-P-E. "Nope."
  - At any given time, that store was either Open, or Nope.
- So here's my question for you:
  - Is our church Open? Or is it Nope?
  - Obviously we're open right now. And from 10-2 on first and third Wednesdays for Pantry
  - But that's not my point.
  - Maybe it's better to ask "Are we an Open Church? Or a Nope Church?"

- Of course we innately understand that we should be open instead of nope.
  - And I decided to proclaim this on the home page of our website recently, aspirationally
  - The new tagline, in big letters, is this: “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.”
  - I hope we’re wide open!
  - And I think the meaning of this is pretty clear. Open Hearts means unconditional love. Open Minds means holy curiosity. And the ability to change our views, and disagree agreeably. And Open Doors means radical hospitality.
  - It would be a bit cocky to claim that these things are all 100% true of St. Michael’s right now.
  - But like I said, it’s aspirational. I believe it’s true enough right now to declare it. But more importantly it shows what we believe in, and what we’re striving for.
- I think we see a lot of this in our readings, from both sides
  - Isaiah depicts a people closed eyes, closed ears and closed minds.
  - Whereas the Psalm begins with a declaration of love, with the psalmist’s “whole heart”. That’s an open heart.
  - For the Gospel passage, it’s Peter who stands at the center
  - At first, his heart and his mind are closed: “Master we have worked all night and caught nothing.”
  - But he then allows his heart and mind to be opened: “But if you say so...”

- I think this is why Peter is such a frequent representative of the church
  - Not only because he was given the keys, or because he was supposedly the first pope
  - But because he is a jumbled-up mixture of skepticism and faith, of pessimism and optimism, of ego and self-doubt
  - And in this scene we catch him right in between those two dualities. We see them back to back.
- First of all, notice that Peter was exhausted
  - He had been fishing all night and coming up empty
  - Sometimes we're hard on ourselves for our lack of faith
  - When really we're just tired. Physically tired from the effort, and emotionally tired from having nothing to show for it.
  - Fishing was his profession, and he had failed.
  - That's enough to close anyone's mind and heart.
- But he had just enough hope left in him. A glimmer of hope. A mustard seed of hope... to say yes.
  - And look what that glimmer produced
  - Two boats, sinking from the weight of all those fish
  - God doesn't ask us to open our hearts or our minds very far. Open that door just an inch, and God can flood your life with abundance.
- You might be tired, too.
  - Maybe you've worked all night and come up empty
  - Maybe you feel like every effort you've made to open your heart or your mind has been thwarted
  - Or worse... punished.

- And so you stay closed to protect yourself
- Because of course you do
- Sometimes I feel like the Church does the same thing
- Christendom has taught us that it's a dangerous world out there
- If we open our doors, we might let in dangerous people
- If we open our minds, we might let in dangerous ideas
- If we open our hearts, we might become dependent. And then we might get disappointed, betrayed, abandoned, traumatized.
- So we close our hearts. We close our minds. We close our doors.
- We put up fences and gates and security systems and we post armed guards at the entrances.
- (Am I speaking literally, or metaphorically? Maybe both.)
- But not one of us is done for. No matter how decimated we feel, there is still something left to redeem.
  - And that's what we see at the end of the Isaiah passage.
  - The land is burned and left barren. Every tree is gone.
  - But there is a stump that remains
  - And inside that stump... a holy seed, ready to grow again
  - We've been fishing all night, to no avail
  - But under those waters is a massive catch of fish, ready to swim into our net
- When the moment arrives, will our sign say Open?
  - Or will it say Nope?

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**



Year C  
RCL

Isaiah 6:1-8, [9-13]  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11  
Psalm 138

The Collect

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Old Testament

**Isaiah 6:1-8, [9-13]**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" [And he said, "Go and say to this people:

'Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.'

Make the mind of this people dull,  
and stop their ears,  
and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and comprehend with their minds,  
and turn and be healed."

Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said:

"Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
and the land is utterly desolate;  
until the LORD sends everyone far away,  
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

Even if a tenth part remain in it,  
it will be burned again,

like a terebinth or an oak  
whose stump remains standing  
when it is felled."

The holy seed is its stump.]

## The Psalm

### Psalm 138

#### *Confitebor tibi*

- 1 I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; \*  
before the gods I will sing your praise.
- 2 I will bow down toward your holy temple  
and praise your Name, \*  
because of your love and faithfulness;
- 3 For you have glorified your Name \*  
and your word above all things.
- 4 When I called, you answered me; \*  
you increased my strength within me.
- 5 All the kings of the earth will praise you, O LORD, \*  
when they have heard the words of your mouth.
- 6 They will sing of the ways of the LORD, \*  
that great is the glory of the LORD.
- 7 Though the LORD be high, he cares for the lowly; \*  
he perceives the haughty from afar.
- 8 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; \*  
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;  
your right hand shall save me.
- 9 The LORD will make good his purpose for me; \*  
O LORD, your love endures for ever;  
do not abandon the works of your hands.

## The New Testament

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11



I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you-- unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them--though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

## The Gospel

### **Luke 5:1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "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. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon

Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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