

## Re-turning

### Luke 5: 1-11

Rev. Sharon

I want to start this sermon with 3 descriptions or RETURNING:

The first is walking a labyrinth...

How many of you have walked a labyrinth? A labyrinth is a maze-like design on the floor, or on the beach, or made of stones in a field... A labyrinth has an entrance, a path, a middle and a return to the exit.

A labyrinth is a spiritual practice. Because it shows us something of where we are in our journeys. As we walk it – left foot, right foot – our brain integrates the left and right side (intellect and emotion), and as we keep turning, and re-turning, the Spirit focuses us on something in our path, worth pondering about.

My favourite labyrinth design comes from Chartres cathedral in France:

- when you enter the Chartres labyrinth you walk a little ways in
- and then you move around and around.
- Each time you come close to where you have been but a little further into the middle.
- And just when you think you are close to arrival in the middle, you are thrown back around to the outer-most circle,
- before finding your way into the centre – the homecoming, intimacy with God.

The labyrinth is a rich learning about beginnings, about life's journey and about returning again and again.

Life is like that eh? Personalities we struggle with, keep showing up; circumstances that are difficult for us to be in, keep coming our way. We keep re-turning to things. But from slightly different angles. And we are invited to come to them differently each time.

To grow, to mature, to move toward inner freedom and peace.

Re-turning.

So that's the first description.

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The second description of returning.

Is something I experienced when attending a cake celebration at one of my friends 12 step AA meeting.

This group of people from all walks of life gather together weekly, sometimes a couple of meetings in a week,

They gather for the common aim to support their decision to live differently.

And each time they gather, as part of their practice, the chairperson asks:  
**Is there anyone who is returning?**

They are asking is there anyone who left for a while, who fell off the wagon, who made a decision to end their sobriety but is now coming back. Re-turning.

Instead of judging people for having left or walked away, the group applauds with loud exclamations "Welcome Back".

For each person in that room knows what it's like to have a moment of human weakness and give up on their sobriety, just one drink... And the courage it takes to come back. To begin again.

So – is there anyone here re-turning? Welcome back.

That's the second description.

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The third description is what happens in our minds when we try to sit in silence during a practice of Christian meditation or centring prayer.

I have a chair in my apartment where I sit in the mornings to pray, to journal and to encounter God's Love in silence.

It takes all the discipline I can muster to get my butt on that chair some mornings.

And when I finally get there and set my timer for 20 minutes, my mind inevitably starts to wonder to all sorts of worries, thoughts and plans for the day ahead.

But I have been taught by lifelong contemplatives, to take a breath and return to a sacred word, that I say gently. And I feel my inner most true self, peel away from the worries and the feelings and the turmoil and the list of to do's.

And return to Presence. And rest.

And in that 20 minutes, my mind might wonder for most of the time, AND every time I do, I get to breath, return and rest.

Father Thomas Keating, the wise contemplative monk who articulated centring prayer for the Christian Community, once said – if your mind wonders 100 times, what a joy, for you get to return to LOVE a 100 times.

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Each of these three descriptions highlight for me the holy act of returning.

- Re-turning to circumstances where there is still much to learn.
- Re-turning to a way of a life, after wandering away.
- Re-turning to rest in God, when the worries and plans and feelings get too overwhelming.

Re-turn.

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**In the Gospel of Luke, we read a masterful story-tellers account of Simon Peter's call and return.**

**For in this version, two stories are conflated into one.**

**Two new beginnings. A first, and a re-turn.**

The first can also be found in the gospel of Matthew and Mark's gospel: It's the first encounter Simon Peter and his friends have with Jesus who is the Christ. We are told that:

<sup>16</sup> Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon and his brother Andrew putting a net into the sea. They were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, "Follow Me. I will make you fish for people!"<sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed Him.

No where is there a large catch of fish.

Just a simple an invitation: follow me and come catch people.

And they did.

**The large catch of fish** happens at the end of John's gospel. After a lot of experience walking with Jesus. This story follows the arrest of Jesus, it follows Simon Peter's denial of knowing Jesus, it follows the crucifixion of Jesus, and it follows the disciples' experiences of the risen Christ, at unpredictable times.

Peter unsure of what to do...

and possibly still living with the shame of his denial of Jesus in the courtyard at his trial, and he decided to return to his boat to fish.

Going back to an old way of being.

Some of the disciples went with him.

And they fished all night and caught nothing.

And they saw Jesus on the lake shore and he told them to put their net over to the right side of the boat to catch fish. And they did. And they caught.

And Peter realized it was Jesus,  
So he jumped into the water and swam to shore.  
He re-turned. He repented – simply put – he turned back toward...  
And sitting around the fire eating fish for breakfast,  
Jesus asked him – Peter do you love me.  
Yes Lord.  
He returned. Their relationship was restored. There was Love and Rest.

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**For in returning and rest we will be saved.**

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Richard Rohr often dips into the theme from Homer's *Odyssey*,

- The island Ithaca, that is both the beginning and the end of the journey.
- We come from God and we return to God and everything in between is a lesson, a seduction, and an invitation.

Somehow the end is in the beginning and the beginning points us toward the end.

What appears to be past and future is in fact the same home, the same call, and the same God—but always a larger life on both ends. To live with Christ, is to live in deep time, where before and after become one.

Our "life", writes Richard Rohr, "is indeed a luminous pause between two great mysteries, which themselves are one."

Come home. Re-turn.

- To yourself
- To your values and decisions
- To your path
- To rest in God.

Amen.