

"Finding"

John 1:29-39

I want to start out today with a "luv" poem....

"If you fall in a river,

There is a Boat,

If you fall in well,

There is Rope,

But if you fall in LOVE,

There is no HOPE."

Isn't falling in love just the greatest feeling in the world?

It's called falling, but it feels like floating; rising up over the moon to touch the stars.

It's as dizzying as your daddy swinging you around when you were a child, making you falling-down-drunk with delight, begging for more.....again.....again Daddy.

Falling in love.....circles a date on the calendar of your days, dividing them into before and after...without you, and with you.

One day, you're alone, binge watching ESPN, the next, you're reading aloud to each other passages from Nicolas Sparks novels.

Anybody here ever fallen in love?

Our reading today from John's gospel is a falling in love story.

Did you catch that?

A fisherman named Andrew and another man...not named....perhaps John, himself, follow behind Jesus.

He turns to them, "What are you looking for?"

They respond, "Teacher, where are you staying?"

And he says, "Come on and see."

John tells us that they followed Jesus home and stayed all day.

We don't know a thing they talked about.

We don't know what they asked Jesus, if anything.

We don't know if he did all the talking.

We don't know if there was some dramatic moment when the light came on and their hearts were strangely warmed.

What we do know is that they fell in love with Jesus.

So in love that when they looked at their watches, and saw that it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon, they did a double take....FOUR OCLOCK??? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN? HOW DID A WHOLE DAY PASS AND IT FELT LIKE A BLIP?

If you've fallen in love you know how a whole day can pass in a second.

And we know that they fell in love with Jesus because we see what happens when at 4 o'clock they skip out his door....they can hardly wait to tell someone.....they want to tell everybody....the man they met in the street, the grocery store cashier, their family, their friends...everybody.

They're dying to tell everybody, which, in fact is what will happen to them...dying because they will not stop telling everybody.

You know what it is to fall in love with someone.

But do you know what it is to fall in love with Jesus Christ?

This is what I long for for each one of you, if you don't already know it....

Because, if you are not in love with the person, Jesus Christ, the living person, Christianity is duller than dirt.

It's a boring set of ideas, of propositions you shrug your shoulders over and nod your head in assent to without really comprehending or caring very much about, really.

But when you fall in love with Jesus, the Christian life is the abundant life Jesus promised.

This story wants to tell us today that falling in love with Jesus is everything.

Now, I know, I know, it sounds so preacherly,

and I can hear the protesting voices....come on, now; I'll give you that these men loved Jesus and followed him, but there he was...right in front of them....a flesh and blood body...they looked up and saw him, they listened, because they heard him speaking. They followed because he was there, walking alongside them.

But that's 2000 years ago.

This is now.

I don't hear him speak.

I don't see his face.

Nobody is walking alongside me that I can see.

You're telling me that I can fall in love with someone I can't see with my eyes or hear with my ears or touch with my hands?

That's precisely what I'm telling you.

Well....you're the preacher...we expect you to say that....

OK....but would you expect someone who had declared themselves pantheist, sometimes agnostic, sometimes atheist, a little bit Jewish, but mostly confused to tell you about the wonder of falling in love with Jesus?

That would be Andrew Garfield, an actor, who plays the role of a Christian missionary, a Jesuit priest, in Martin Scorsese's latest movie, SILENCE.

The movie tells the story of two Christian missionaries, Jesuit priests played by Andrew Garfield who also played Spiderman, and Adam Driver who face the ultimate test of faith when they travel to Japan in search of their missing mentor (Liam Neeson) - at a time when Christianity was outlawed and their presence forbidden.

In order to prepare for his role as a Jesuit missionary, Andrew Garfield spent a year reading the Bible, meditating upon it, praying the contemplative prayers of St. Ignatius.

He was doing it so that he could get into character....but discovered that Jesus got into him.

This is how the pantheist, agnostic, atheist, mostly confused actor describes what happened to him:

*This was the most surprising thing....this was the most remarkable thing....how easy it was to fall in love with this person, to fall in love with Jesus. I felt so bad for him and angry on his behalf when I finally did meet him, because everyone has given him such a bad name....and he has been used for so many dark things. It brings me so much consolation. It's such a humbling thing devoting a year of your life to spiritual transformation, sincerely longing and putting that longing into action, creating a relationship with Christ and with God.....it's a wonderful, wonderful grace to be given, to be shown.*

His name is Andrew Garfield, but his name could be Andrew the fishermen, or it could be your name.

It all begins by spending time with him....as Andrew and John did....and this is the really hard thing, isn't it, for so many of you.

This is the last Sunday of our prospective member class, and I've been thinking of you, who are in this group, and praying for you by name....I know that everyone of you is working so hard, some of you with small children, needing so much from you.

I'm praying for you what I pray for every member of this church, that you'll somehow find the time, make the time to spend with Jesus.

Because here's the truth....if you don't make time, love can't grow.

Can you imagine falling in love with a human being and saying to them.....oh I love ya, and I love you so much that I'm going to squeeze in an hour for you sometime next month...and if my schedule works out, I may make that an hour a week....I'm gonna do that because I love you so much.

Nope, you've got to make time, and that's a really hard thing, even when you want to.

For me, it means getting up earlier than I really want to, laying aside the computer, the phone, the newspaper, the TV, to go to the quiet corner.

And as long as I have done it, it hasn't gotten any easier.....and there are so many good reasons to skip it.

And sometimes, even many times, that time set apart is not full of earth shattering revelations, or heavenly voices...and I slurp coffee and struggle to attend to the unseen presence.

But here is what I have come to discover.

My days and times are better days and times when I am faithful to that time.....and when I am not, peace slips away and joy follows behind it.

There are many days when the conversation begun there in that quiet corner continues right on through the day.....I hear him speak....this is something I want you to do.....this is something I want you to stop doing.....

And when I listen to him, and seek to do what he says, I see something happening in me....I look a little less like my old troubled self and more like my new self....that bears a resemblance to his self.

Lord knows, and Sally will tell you, I've got such a long way to go....

But I know this much for sure....I am not traveling that long way alone.

What do you do, if you take the time? What do you do in the time?

Well, I can tell you what I do.

I listen to him....I speak to him, but I do a lot of listening.

And because my mind wanders so, I have to write in order to listen....I keep a journal.

I'm listening right now using the Book of Daily Prayer....I've used other things....it's good to change up so you don't get lazy and bored.

There's a psalm for the day, then a reading from the Old Testament, a reading from the letters of the New Testament, and a reading from one of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

I start reading with a question and an expectation....what are you going to say to me today? What are you going to tell me?

Sometimes I read all the readings, and there is nothing.

Sometimes I don't even get through a few verses of the beginning psalm when he begins to speak, to teach, to heal, to help.

And there is nothing like it....nothing like it....to realize that the God who was and is and is to come is stooping down to speak his Living Word Jesus to you by the power of his Spirit.

It's so hard to describe, but you begin to sense that you are moving, have moved into his heart and he into yours....so that you do not know where you end and he begins....and isn't that what true love is?

And you know that this love is the whole reason you were created and given life and breath.

Let me tell you, if you don't know that, and long to, long to fall in love with Jesus Christ, I want to help you.

More than any other thing I may do here, I want to do this one thing: help you discover for yourself the love that sent Andrew and John skipping out of Jesus' house.

Please hear this.....I don't mean, by telling you that, that I'm special, or spiritual, or spectacular in my faith.

I am before God, just like you, a poor beggar, but I am a poor beggar who has found bread and can tell you where you can find bread.

Won't you let me be a pastor, a shepherd to you and help you.

Nothing would mean more to me.

You don't have to walk down the aisle or answer an altar call....just say quietly to him, "I want to see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly, day by day.

If you want someone to walk with you, then tug on my sleeve.

"If you fall in a river, there's a boat;

If you fall in a well, there's a rope;

But to fall in love with Jesus, is your only true hope."