

# Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, February 9, 2025  
"Becoming"

## *Young at Heart Message*

I wonder how many of you can relate to this:

I used to work as an Executive Assistant at a large company.

Of course, that company had a computer network and an entire IT department.

Whenever something would go wrong with my computer, I had to call someone in IT to have them help me fix it.

Unlike my own computer at home, I was very limited in terms of what I could do to fix my work computer.

The one thing I *could* do, though, was turn the computer off and turn it back on and see if that fixed the problem.

Inevitably, *every* time I had a computer issue, I would turn the computer off and back on, and the issue wouldn't be fixed. So, I would call IT.

And, what do you suppose IT tells you to do?

Turn off the computer and turn it back on.

And, of course, I would say, "I already tried that."

And what would they say?

"Try it again."

What do you suppose happened next?

Voila! 99% of the time, when IT told me to turn it off and turn it back on, it would magically work, despite the fact that I already tried that.

Here's another, more recent story that perhaps you can relate to:

Some of you may know that a couple weeks ago, my car wouldn't start.

Someone from church very kindly came to jumpstart my battery to help see if that was the issue.

We got the car started, and I drove it around a bit – perhaps 15-20 minutes total.

I turned the car off, thinking all was well, only to come back out 30 minutes later to a car that wouldn't start again.

Another very kind church member came to jumpstart my battery again, and then followed me to the shop so I could have them take a look and replace the battery if needed.

What do you suppose happened?

I arrived at the shop, and they did their battery tests, and lo and behold – the battery was working fine. They said it had 85% life left.

*Of course* when you get the vehicle to the shop, they'll tell you nothing is wrong with it!

Just like the IT department assumes you're either lying or you're nuts when you tell them you turned your computer off and back on already and it didn't help, the car works just fine when you get it to the shop.

These things might actually be some kind of universal law.

We try something – sometimes trying multiple times, or at least giving it quite the valiant effort with no luck – and then the professional comes along and tells you to do the same thing again.

You humour them and try again, skeptically, only to look a fool when you said it wouldn't work, and suddenly, the thing you've already tried works like you never tried in the first place!

### ***The Message***

I cannot be the only one who has had experiences like this.

Because most of us have experienced this before, we can relate to how Simon Peter feels when they'd been out fishing all night, dropping their nets over and over again and not catching any fish.

Then Jesus comes along and tells them to go do the same exact thing they've been doing all night to no avail.

They go and drop their nets, and voila! Like magic, they catch so many fish that their boat almost capsizes!

And now, Peter looks a fool because he told Jesus they'd already tried that.

This is basically the 1<sup>st</sup> century version of the IT person or the auto mechanic appearing to be a magician.

Peter has not met Jesus before now. I can only imagine he thinks this is some kind of sorcery.

And yet, it is a perfect example of our very human resistance to follow God's call.

We saw it last week when we read from the Book of Jeremiah. When God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet, Jeremiah says, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

God chuckles at this and says "sure you do!" God touches Jeremiah's lips, and lo and behold – Jeremiah can speak as a prophet.

From our vantage point, we might wonder, "who *wouldn't* want to be a prophet and follow God's call?"

As it turns out, a lot of the prophets didn't initially want to be prophets or follow God's call.

Moses, when encountering the burning bush, says to God, "who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11)

Elijah, afraid of Jezebel, runs into the wilderness and asks God to take his life. "I have had enough, Lord," he pleads. (1 Kings 19: 2-5)

Jonah literally ran away from his calling. (Jonah 1:3)

Similarly, Ezekiel isn't too pleased to be carried away by the Spirit either: The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD on me. (Ezekiel 3:14)

And, of course, in the New Testament we see this constant push-back from Jesus' disciples, starting with Simon Peter by the Lake of Gennesaret.

I actually like all of these stories because they all demonstrate just how *normal* it is to feel uncertainty about our call.

*And*, more importantly, they demonstrate each person's journey toward what I will call "becoming." Each of these prophets or disciples becomes exactly who God created them to be.

But, part of that journey for each of them was acknowledging their own resistance.

I don't know if you remember, but nearly a year ago during Lent, we spent weeks following Simon Peter's journey as he wrestled with his call and repeatedly questioned Jesus.

I don't know how many times Simon Peter tells Jesus that what Jesus is asking is impossible, only to be proven wrong time and time again.

But it is in Simon Peter's journey that we watch his story of "becoming" unfold.

Are there times in your life in which you have experienced a similar resistance, thinking "ugh, God, I've already *tried* this! Why do you keep pushing me to try again? It never works."

And then, all the sudden, seemingly out of nowhere, you try again and voila! Like magic, the thing you resisted for so long works.

I'll try to give you an example from my own life.

For a very long time – most of my life, in fact – I resisted my call to ministry.

Well, perhaps more accurately, I wasn't aware that God was calling me to ministry at all. I did not hear God ask, "Whom shall I send?"

And yet, somehow, despite my resistance to organized religion and Church, I kept skirting around religion.

It just kept showing up!

I chose to leave the Catholic Church and explored the Lutheran Church in high school.

I went to University and studied and explored Buddhism and Hinduism academically, and I explored the Baha'i faith on a personal level.

I graduated with a degree in Religious Studies and eventually got a job working for a company at which I got to work with people on their own faith journeys of exploration.

I landed a part-time gig as a church office manager.

Then my ex-partner invited me to his church, and I *very* reluctantly went along, which sparked my curiosity about Christianity and prompted me to decide to go to Seminary.

BUT, it's important to note that I had *no* intention, even at that point, of becoming a pastor. God, by the way, had to have been laughing at this point.

Then I found the Moravian Church.

Throughout my journey, I imagine God repeatedly felt like Jesus felt with Simon Peter.

Jamie! Get it together! I know you're going to end up a pastor – you can't get around it. Just get on with it already!

But, like Simon Peter, I had to ask a million questions. I had to go in circles a bit.

I had to make sure God knew that I'd already tried to get back into religion and the church and it didn't seem to be working for me.

And then, like Jesus tells Simon Peter to try once more, God told me to try again. God kept asking, "Whom shall I send?"

And finally, I sighed and said "Here I am. Send me!"

Suddenly, I was on a journey of becoming – a path I continue to walk. I continue to wrestle with God, ask hard questions, and, sometimes, resist God's call.

And I bet you do, too. Because we are human. We are no different than Simon Peter.

We are each on our own journey of "becoming."

It is beautiful. It can be painful. It can be difficult. It can take us outside of our comfort zone. But it always surprises us and delights us when, like magic, we know we are no longer resisting what God wants for us.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, the nets we've cast over and over again without success are filled to the brim with metaphorical fish.

And Jesus looks at us with a knowing smile and says, "see, I told you. All you had to do was trust me, leave your resistance behind, and follow me."

And in doing so, we humbly begin our journey toward our true self, called by God, setting aside our resistance, and delighting in the joy of becoming.

God asks "Whom shall I send?" And we finally respond "I will go. Send me!" Amen.

Let us pray:

God of compassion, help us to trust you and to welcome your call into your hearts. When we hear you whispering, wondering "Whom shall I send?," give us the courage to boldly respond "I will go. Send me!" Help us to set aside fear of the unknown and step bravely toward you, setting aside any resistance we may feel. Guide us into your loving embrace and hold us there, delighting in your mystery, your love, your acceptance, and your grace. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.