

## **2018 FHUMC Winter Message Series: "At the Rail"**

Series Lens: Using Peter's responses to Jesus as a way for us to respond to Jesus.

Series Theme Verse: "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

Series Blurb: We begin the new year and our Sabbath Jubilee by rekindling our passionate spirituality. For six weeks starting Sun., Jan. 7, we are going back to our first Love, and recommitting ourselves and our church to our foundational relationship with Jesus. We will follow Peter's words to Jesus as he struggled to follow Him closely; we are much like Peter! Each Sunday during this series we will invite people to spend time at the altar prayer railing during worship to put their hearts with God's. We'll see you at the rail!

**Sunday, Jan. 7, 2018** First Sunday in Jan. and At the Rail series. Holy Communion.

### **Message #1: "If You Say So, I will"**

Theme: Saying "yes" to Jesus, even when we don't understand it all yet.

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11 (Miraculous catch of fish; calling Simon to follow)

Peter's response: "If you say so, I will!" Luke 5:1-11

Blurb: Let's meet Jesus. Let's start our year by reconnecting with our first Love. For centuries, people have knelt before God and invited Jesus into their hearts. We're going to have this opportunity every Sunday in January. This Sunday we begin our winter message series, and we are all invited to kneel before Jesus and invite Him into our hearts. Peter's responses to Jesus will guide us each week. This time we hear Peter say, "Lord, if you say so, I will." Come ready to say "yes" to Jesus!

### ***WORSHIP OUTLINE:***

**Opening Song:** *Magnify*

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

Happy New Year! and welcome to Forest Hills Church, where we Love God and others, Grow in our relationship with Jesus, and Serve others powered and led by the Holy Spirit!

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here.

A special welcome to those here for the first time!

We hope you experience God's love and the care of His family here at Forest Hills.

Please stop by the welcome center and get a mug as our gift to you.

We hope your cup runs over with praise and blessings!

We invite kids to stay in worship, as our whole service is intended for all ages.

There is the nursery available, as well as kids' activity bags, and craft table.

**Grow Moment:**

I also want to ask you each to join one of our new small groups starting this week.

-Small groups are a time and place to ask those questions and dig deeper into the Bible. It's about experiencing what we're learning. Let's meet Leon!

### Small Group Video

- Sign up sheets are out in the lobby. Sign up for one today! Lots of options!
- Starting this week, meet weekly for six weeks.
- Each week is standalone. Can jump in at any time!
- Goal is to get 80 people into groups. Right now we have 70.
- We need you! A great new year's resolution!

### Memory Verse

As we start our new year, we ground our life spiritually on God, seeking Him with all our hearts. A favorite verse from the Bible is Jeremiah 29:11. It says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans for a hope and a future." Today we're going to look at what comes next. We often stop too soon. There is more really good stuff! It's our theme verse for our new message series, and our memory verse this morning. It's Jeremiah 29:12-13, and it says, "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." God's plans of blessing and future are possible when we seek Him and come to Him. Let's try it together:

**PowerPoint:** "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

### Worship Set: - Sanctify

*Cannons*  
*O God Our Help in Ages Past*  
*Different*  
 Worship prayer - Andrew

**Skit:** "Peter in Starbucks" (Andrew and Michael or Matt)

### Bumper Video

**Message:** At the Rail: If You Say So, I Will!

**PP#1:** At the Rail

If You Say So, I Will!

"Simon replied, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets.'" -Luke 5:5

At the Rail. If You Say So, I Will! Luke 5:5, "Simon replied, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets.'"

**PP#2:** *Picture of Historic St. George's UMC, Philadelphia*

I tricked my family on our vacation in November. I told them we were going on a Revolutionary War history tour of Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. And we did see many Revolutionary War sites in and around these areas. But I had a secret agenda. Well, maybe not so

secret! In each of these places there *just happened* to be pivotal early Methodist history sites. In Philadelphia, eight blocks from Independence Hall, we visited Historic St. George's, the first incorporated Methodist church in the United States. The great early Methodist preachers preached there: Whitefield, Asbury, Coke, Web, Pilmore, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and the museum was filled with their artifacts. In Boston, Charles Wesley preached from the pulpit of the Old North Church, whose steeple later showed the lanterns that set Paul Revere on his midnight ride warning that the British were coming by land. Then in New York, in lower Manhattan, just four blocks from the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street and five blocks from One World Trade Center, is John Street Methodist chapel. It's the oldest Methodist *congregation* in the country—it's founding society started one year before the one in Philadelphia.

**PP#3:** *Picture of me standing in the pulpit at John Street UMC, with the Wesley clock behind me.*

My secret agenda for this tour was to complete my quest to stand in all the great 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist pulpits. I was able to do that, even though not necessarily with permission. More than once I distracted the curators and snuck into the pulpit when they weren't looking! Here I'm standing in the Asbury pulpit in the museum in New York, and I didn't ask permission first!

**PP#4:** *Picture of the prayer rail at John St. UMC (without me kneeling there)*

But what I again noticed, in each of these early churches, was the central importance of the prayer rail. In fact, the rail was probably more significant than the pulpit! For it was when the people knelt at the prayer railing that the important spiritual work was done: laying hearts open before the Lord, prayers of repentance and confession, accepting forgiveness and grace, declarations of taking Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, and commitments to live wholly for Jesus. The pulpit may have spoke to the mind, but it was at the prayer railings that hearts were given to Jesus.

This winter, as we begin our church's Jubilee year, we are going back to the prayer rail. We are re-grounding ourselves on our primary relationship with Jesus. We're taking six weeks and having a revival, a time of renewal, a reconnecting to Jesus as our first love. So, starting this Sunday, we're going to have prayer time at our prayer rail. I'm going to invite you each week to kneel before God—physically and spiritually—and open your hearts to Him.

Our church here also used to have a prayer railing. It was rather awkward, as you had to climb steps to get back up there. Some of you may remember kneeling there! But we've created a kneeling rail down here so we all can get to it. I want to call us to our knees, physically and spiritually, as we begin our new year. Everything else we do, or know, or find important in our lives or as a church, is built on our primary connection to Jesus.

**PP#5:** *Image of Peter sitting or standing close to Jesus.*

To do this, we're going to listen to how Peter responds to Jesus in the Bible. Peter was one of Jesus' closest followers. At times he was strong and committed, and sold out for Jesus. At other times he floundered, doubted, and fell away. We are a lot like Peter, I think: up and down in our relationship with Jesus. And so we're going to take six of Peter's declarations to Jesus and see if we can't make them our responses, too, so we can get closer to Jesus.

The first response we're going to look at, that Peter makes to Jesus, comes early on when Jesus is still new to Peter.

**PP#6: *Image of Peter and Andrew fishing.***

Peter was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, in the north of Israel. He and his brother Andrew were partners, and seems to have had a working relationship with another fishing family, Zebedee and his sons James and John. Peter is the one disciple we know was married, and so he's believed to be the oldest of Jesus' disciples. Peter's name was actually Simon, but Jesus gives him the name Peter, which means "rock." Later, Peter would be the rock among the disciples after Jesus went back to heaven.

When Jesus begins His public ministry, He is baptized by John the Baptist. One of John's followers is Andrew, and it's Andrew who brings his brother Simon Peter to Jesus when John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah.

The brothers go back home to Capernaum, and Jesus back to Nazareth. But soon Jesus moves to Capernaum, and again encounters Andrew and Simon Peter. Actually, it's a fishing story!

Jesus is teaching, and people follow Him around. The story begins with a boat.

**PP#7: Luke 5:1-11 (CEB)**

5:1 One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around Him to hear God's word. 2 Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. 3 Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

Luke chapter 5, "One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret [also called Galilee] when the crowd pressed in around Him to hear God's word. 2 Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. 3 Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat."

So, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing all night, as you do when you fish with nets—the fish are calm and close to the bottom of the lake. They come in at morning to clean up, and we'll soon see they had been unsuccessful that night.

A crowd is following Jesus, and pushing into Him. He decides to get into a boat and talk to the people from the boat. Genius, if you think about it!

**PP#8: Luke 5:1-11 (CEB)**

4 When Jesus finished speaking to the crowds, He said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

5 Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

6 So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. 7 They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.

Verse 4. "When Jesus finished speaking to the crowds, He said to Simon, 'Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch.' Simon replied, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets.' So they dropped the nets and

their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.”

**PP#9:** Luke 5:1-11 (CEB)

8 When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Leave me, Lord, for I’m a sinner!” 9 Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. 10 James and John, Zebedee’s sons, were Simon’s partners and they were amazed too.

Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people.” 11 As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Verse 8: “When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Leave me, Lord, for I’m a sinner!’ Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. James and John, Zebedee’s sons, were Simon’s partners and they were amazed too. Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people.’ As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.”

**PP#10:** *Image of Peter kneeling before Jesus on the shore.*

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing all night long. They were fishermen by trade and were experienced. They also knew the frustration of doing their best, and coming up empty. I image them muttering and consoling each other as they cleaned their nets. “What a rotten night. I thought it was going to be better. The moon is in the right place. Wind was calm. But sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Maybe it’ll be better next time. Who can understand fish? Looks like today we’re eating only bread. Maybe tomorrow I’ll be able to buy the pots my mother-in-law’s been asking for. Who knows.”

A crowd begins to gather and Jesus is at the center. Peter remembers Jesus. So, he stops cleaning his net and joins the crowd. Jesus then turns and gets into *his* boat! Simon Peter must have sprung into action, getting into the boat and helping Jesus push off into the water. This also means that Peter has literally a front row seat to listen to Jesus. He may have been busy keeping the boat from drifting, but he was listening to Jesus.

Peter must have been tired, and crabby. Yet this Man, and His words, made his heart race. Then, when Jesus is finished, He turns directly to Peter. Row out and drop your nets. Same place as you were all night with no luck. And now, when it’s the wrong time of day. Jesus was from Nazareth...He was no fisherman. But I love Simon Peter’s reply. “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I will.”

**PP#11:** At the Rail: “But if you say so, I will!”

We are frustrated and defeated

We are empty and tired

This is how we are like Peter! We know what it’s like to fish all night and catch nothing, working hard for something that never materializes. We know the frustration of not getting what we’ve tried so hard for. That defeat...being so exhausted...giving up hope.

What’s that like for you? Is it your marriage? Your kids, your job, your finances? Do you work so hard, and keep going backwards? New Year’s can be a painful time, when we look back and

that failure stares right at us, and we have that overwhelming realization that we can't do enough to change it in the future, no matter how hard we try!

That response from Peter is so real! "We've worked so hard all night long and caught nothing!"

**PP#12:** At the Rail: "But if you say so, I will!"

We are frustrated and defeated  
 We are empty and tired  
 But Jesus speaks words of life  
 And our hope begins again

But notice, he calls Jesus "Master." Peter's heart has been awakened by Jesus' words. They make his heart burn. They awaken hope, and new possibilities. This Jesus makes him feel alive again. He's willing to try, to trust, to give it one more go. "But because you say so, I will!"

Peter puts his hope not in Jesus' *experience*, or knowledge, or expertise. He puts his hope in Jesus *Himself*. I'll do what you say, even when I don't understand, or it doesn't make sense. I'm exhausted. I've given it my best, and I got nothing." Jesus is not a long shot. Peter's been listening. Jesus is speaking words of life. Peter feels alive again. Here's the key: Peter is willing to put his trust in Jesus and do whatever He says, even when it doesn't make sense.

Peter "kneels at the rail" by putting his net into the water. And it's in front of everyone, mind you! It's a public display, just like our prayer railing is.

And when he does, fish swamp all their boats! Then Peter is physically, literally, on his knees before Jesus. This Jesus may be the Messiah! This may be God showing up! And the prayer railing becomes a confessional, where Peter cries out his sin and unworthiness.

**PP#13:** At the Rail: "But if you say so, I will!"

We are frustrated and defeated  
 We are empty and tired  
 But Jesus speaks words of life  
 And our hope begins again  
 We open our hearts to Jesus!

Jesus restores him, in the same words that every angel and godly presence has said to people in the Bible every time: "Do not be afraid." "You are fine. You are okay before God. In fact, now that you have opened your heart, I have work for you to do." And they leave their boats and nets and follow Jesus. They take Jesus as their physical Lord and Master, and literally follow Him around.

**PP#14:** *Picture of me kneeling at the John Street prayer railing.*

Today we're going to have Holy Communion at the rail. I want to give each of us an opportunity to come to Jesus, maybe even kneeling, and open our hearts to Him.

You know your life. You know how you've been "fishing all night" in whatever way that is. You know what it's like to want to live fully again, to have hope again, to want to have Jesus set your heart on fire!

You can invite Jesus in! You can give Him a chance, give Him a try.

In a moment I'll invite you to come down as there is room and kneel or stand at this rail. I'll bring the elements of bread and juice to you, and when you are done, you can return to your seat. Then, as there's room, others can come in and fill in, and I'll serve again. I'll keep going until everyone has had a chance to come up. If you can't come up, at the end, I'll come down to you. This is for everyone. Jesus can lift your frustration, your sin, your stuckness, and give you new life! We all can say to Jesus, "I have tried and failed. I'm weary. But because you say so, I will!"

We begin in our seats, as we confess with Peter, "I am unworthy, for I am a sinner!" We are honest. We are real. We admit our empty fishing, our pointless efforts, our exhausted hope.

[Pause.]

And we hear Jesus say, "Fear not!" When we are real before God, and honest, then we are okay! For we are forgiven, and restored.

### **PP: Holy Communion**

This is true, because Jesus took our sin away. He earned our forgiveness by dying on the cross. On the night when Jesus was betrayed....

### **Lord's Prayer**

### **Holy Communion**

When you come up, come down the side aisles. Bring your offerings.

Kneel or stand at the prayer railing, or sit in the left-side pew.

Return to your seats along the outside edges. Put your cups in the baskets against the walls.

Come, and fill in as there is room.

**Offering:** "I Will Be Found By You" -Sanctify

**Closing Song:** *The Lion and the Lamb* - Sanctify

**PowerPoint:** "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

**Announcements:** Wed. M&M: Meal: Pancakes, More: Small Groups & Board Games.  
AMT meeting this week Thursday, pushing us into our pause for the new year.

**Benediction:** -David

**Ch@Home**

Memory Verse: "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

Read: Luke 5:1-11

Reflect: Peter and Andrew "laid down their nets" and followed Jesus. What are the "nets" you have to "lay down" in order to follow Jesus more fully?

Discuss: What are some times in your life that you have felt like you have been "fishing all night" to no avail? Have you noticed God showing up at those times? How has He helped you "bring in a large catch" in ways that you did not expect?

Activity: Practice fishing for people: Share with someone this week a way that God has helped you through a difficult time in your life.

Prayer: (If possible, kneel while praying.) Recommit your life to following Jesus, and ask Jesus what you need to "lay down" at this point in your life.