

I

As many of you know, my wife and I are parents of twin second-graders here in the Clarke County School District, and they have been learning about Georgia history in their social studies curriculum. They've been sharing with us what they've been learning about Tomachici and Mary Musgrove and James Oglethorpe.

Most of you know I came up through Texas public schools, and so I it will be my sacred duty to homeschool them in their Texas history. And as I thought about all these faithful public servants with us today, I was reminded of a famous quotation by an elected official who, even though he died nearly 200 years ago, is still revered to this day in Texas.

He was born August 17, 1786, in Tennessee, and in 1817, he entered public office as a county commissioner. In 1821, he was elected to the Tennessee General Assembly. He ran for the United States Congress in 1825 and lost, but ran again in 1827 and won. He held his seat in 1829, but lost his re-election bid in 1831, only to win back the seat in 1833. He was strongly opposed to many of the policies of President Andrew Jackson, especially the Indian Removal Act, and in an 1835 speech, he described the President as a tyrant "worse than Cromwell, Caesar, or Bonaparte." In retribution, the President worked his political and media connections to see to

it that the Congressman was defeated once again in the 1835 campaign.

Upon learning of his defeat, the now ex-Congressman said, "You all can go to [expletive], I'm going to Texas." And he did just that, and on March 6, 1836, he died in San Antonio at a place called The Alamo. His name was Davy Crockett.

II

We've all been there, haven't we? Not Texas or the Alamo, but rather that place where we've worked and worked and worked at something, where we've put ourselves on the line for something which we believe in with every fiber of our being. We've sacrificed time and financial resources and important relationships on behalf of a cause. We've overcome obstacles and dealt with adversity and setbacks.

But there comes a point where it feels like the deck is stacked against us, where people we trusted and worked alongside have betrayed us, and we say, enough. You can go to [expletive]. I'm going to Texas.

III

I think that's what had happened to Peter in our story from John's gospel. When Peter said, "I'm going fishing," I think he said it with the same tone of fatigue and irritation that Davy Crockett said, "I'm going to Texas."

Over and over and over again, Peter had put himself on the line for the cause of Christ. When Jesus met Peter on the lakeshore and said to him, “Come follow me, and I will make you fish for people,” and Peter dropped his nets and followed Jesus.

When Jesus came walking across the water, it was Peter who said, “Lord, if it’s really you, then call to me to come to you, and I’ll get out of this boat right here and now.”

It was Peter who gave the correct answer when Jesus asked, “Who do *you* say that I am?” He said, “You are the Christ, the Messiah, the long-promised and long-awaited Savior.”

It was Peter who sprang to Jesus defense, sword in hand, when Judas betrayed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was Peter who was prepared to lay his very life on the line for the cause, until the Prince of Peace admonished him to put away his sword, for those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

Yes, when the chips were down, Peter had denied three times that he ever even heard of Jesus. Yes, when Jesus hung on the cross on Friday, Peter was nowhere to be found. But on Sunday morning, when the women came back from the cemetery and reported that the tomb was empty, it was Peter who got up and ran to look for himself.

But it had just become too much. Peter’s head was spinning. His heart was hurting. He needed time to think, to breathe, to just be. And so he decided to pack up and leave Jerusalem. John’s gospel doesn’t quite put it this way, but I can almost see him saying, “You all can go to Sheol. I’m going fishing.”

And Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples decided that sounded like a fine idea, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” And so these seven went back to the lake, back to their boats, back to their nets, back to the life they had known before.

I’m not much of a fisherman myself, but I can see the appeal. It’s quiet. It’s just you and a few companions in a boat, far removed from the stress of city life. And there’s a certain rhythm to it. Cast. Tug. Pull. Repeat. Cast. Tug. Pull. Repeat.

And so that’s what they did. All day, and into the night. Cast. Tug. Pull. Repeat.

Over and over, all day and into the night. No conversation. No interruptions. Just them, the water, and the sky.

But they fished all night long and caught precisely zero fish. I’ve been on fishing trips like that. And you know all the jokes – that’s why they call it fishing instead of catching.

IV

Maybe that's you this morning. You're just flat out overwhelmed. You've had enough. And all you want to do is say, "Y'all can have this. I'm going fishing."

Or maybe you've been fishing all day and into the night. And you've cast your net. And you've tugged. And you've pulled. And you've worked and worked and worked, but you've caught precisely nothing. And you're tired. And you're hungry. And maybe even a little bit cranky.

And here's the crazy thing. This itinerant rabbi keeps showing up in the middle of your life. Whether you lock yourself in an upper room, or whether you decide, the heck with it all, I'm going fishing, the resurrected Christ keeps showing up. He calls from the beach and says, "My child, you have no fish, do you?" And then he says, "Cast the net to the right side, and you will find some."

Isn't that fascinating? He doesn't say – "Maybe you should give up fishing and find a new line of work. This doesn't seem to be working out for you."

He doesn't say – "You're doing it all wrong. Here, let me take over."

He simply invites you to cast your net to the other side of the boat – to make a change of no more than five or six feet. But don't be fooled – it is a

change. Fishing on the left side of the boat will only bring the same result you've already been getting. The change is a small one – from one side of the boat to the other – but it's a change, nonetheless.

And that's the thing about Jesus. Every time he meets someone, he invites them to change. Drop your nets and follow me. Take up your mat and walk. Does no one condemn you? Then neither do I condemn you. Now, go and sin no more.

Discipleship in Jesus Christ always requires a change in what you've been doing. And so he invites you to cast your nets on the other side of the boat this morning. Stop doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Cast your nets to the right side. You might just be amazed at what happens when you follow his fishing tips.

And then, he invites you to come and have some breakfast. Come, whether you're dry or dripping. Come, whether you're a lifelong angler or just out to enjoy a day on the lake. Come, bring your weary body and weary soul, pull up next to the fire, and let Jesus take the bread, and pour the cup. Come to the Table, for it has been prepared for you.

V

But come knowing this. Once we have been fed, once we have had our fill,

know that we will be sent from this place. Peter and the rest were sent back to Jerusalem, for there was yet more work to do there. You and I will be sent out of this place this morning, back to our homes and offices and schools and workplaces and courtrooms and government buildings. We will be sent from this Table to be the church, the body of Christ. We will be sent from this Table to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

And as the body of Christ, we will be broken. We will be poured out, precisely because we bear the name of Christ. Because we take seriously his commandments to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, because we proclaim that Christ is Lord above any nation or leader or party or denomination or tribe, then it's guaranteed that we will be broken and poured out.

Because we follow Jesus above all other powers and principalities and authorities and rulers in this world, it's guaranteed that it will cost us something – a job, an election, an opportunity, a relationship, maybe even a life. Because we follow Jesus in a broken and sinful world, it's guaranteed that we will be hurt, we will become tired deep within our very bones.

And when that happens, when we are ready to give up, when we are ready to say, "I've had enough, you all can stick it, I'm going fishing" -- when have

fished all night and caught nothing, a Voice will call to us once again from the shore and say, "My dear, sweet beloved children, cast your nets to the right side of the boat, and then come on in and have some breakfast."

Thanks be to God. Amen.