

“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch”

My wife and I have been great fans of Andy Griffith reruns – and I don’t even want to probe the psychology that makes us do that. Maybe it’s just because they’re funny. For instance there is that episode in which the schoolboys hate history and are giving their teacher fits. She complains to Andy who thinks up a way of solving the problem. He agrees with the boys that history is boring, who would want to sit through a class in history – and there is a pause – and then: who would want to hear about the shot heard round the world. And the boys agree – except again there is a pause – on their part. The shot heard round the world? ask the boys. Their attention has been caught, thought is triggered within their brains by a metaphor.

Even Barney Fife creases his brow: what shot heard round the world? Which allows Andy to recount the story of Paul Revere and Lexington and Concord Bridge – pivoting their young minds into an interest they didn’t know they had, to think of history as Eventful.

And of course Andy is referring to a poetic treatment of that moment in history, Emerson’s memorial poem at Concord Bridge, which translated a mere skirmish into verse, a language appropriate to an Event, into something truer than just factual:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
 Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
 And fired the shot heard round the world . . .

On this green bank, by this soft stream
 We set today a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem
 When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Metaphor! Making an event transcend transient Time (i.e. 1775) by making it ever present potentially; seeing it as deeper or far reaching or as “fundamentally” true. There is a tendency in modern times due to the prevalence of science that only what’s proven in a laboratory is true – that poetic language is entertaining but inapplicable when it comes to solving problems. And I’m sure Simon (laboring as he did all night in shallow water?) was too weary to trust working overtime in deeper water as Jesus suggested.

Even as so many millions of people – given their constant need to get everyday things done – have little time to think – or think deep about who and why and what and where (in time and space) they are . . . and time slips by, netting little . . . To such (and I am among them) the Jesus of today’s Gospel says – “I know you are weary from fishing in shallow waters – but lower your nets in quest of the deeper meanings of your life and draw up a greater understanding of why you exist and how to exist.” That is what faith is about – especially if it is more than ankle deep.

