

# Deep Water

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Luke 5:1-11

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Our lesson today begins with Jesus on the lakeshore. He was teaching to the crowds who were beginning to press in on him. Jesus spotted two boats and got into one of them—the one that belonged to Simon Peter. Peter was over washing out his nets, which meant he was finished fishing for the day—or more likely the night. He asked Peter to push out a way from the shore, then began to teach the crowd from the boat, where they couldn't press in on him.

When Jesus finished what he had to say, he told Peter to push out to deep water and pull his nets back out for a catch of fish. Well, Peter, responded in his human way, remarking that he had been fishing all night and hadn't caught a thing. What Peter hadn't realized about Jesus yet, was that Jesus didn't really care about the fish—he had a much bigger lesson in store.

Our lesson today is a story of call. It comes to an ordinary man who is in the midst of his own struggle to make a living for himself and his family—a man who is feeling despondent over working all night long to bring in a good catch of fish and he came back to the shore empty handed.

Jesus knows Peter's situation. He knows he must be exhausted and feeling down, yet he turns to him and invites him to do something: "Go out into the deep water, and there let your nets down."

Peter argues a little and says that he has been out there all night and there just aren't any fish to be had today. Finally, though, maybe out of sheer exhaustion, he agrees to do what Jesus asks.

Sounds like a pretty simple thing to do, doesn't it? But is it really. Do you understand what Jesus is really asking here? He is asking Simon Peter to trust him. To trust him so much that he would leave the shallow waters of the lake **and his life** and head out to explore deeper waters. He's asking him to go to the

limits of what he knows to be true (that there aren't any fish out there) and to trust in Jesus.

As this lesson started out, we heard Jesus teaching to the crowds from the *shallow* water, but the **real** lesson is learned when he says to his followers, "Go out into the deep water, out into the fast currents, out into those rough waters, and that's where I want you to do the fishing. That's where I want you to be creative."

Sometimes it's just more comfortable in the shallow water, though, isn't it? We may be like Peter, who is reluctant at first to do what Jesus asked him to do. Because, he—like us—knows that once we take the risk of leaving what is familiar and comfortable, once we leave the shallow water of our lives and step out into the deep, the direction of our lives might very well change and never be the same again.

Peter knew that when he left the shallow places behind—shallow places like his work, shallow places in his relationships with others, to himself and to God—when he left those behind and dared to go just a little bit deeper in trust, things were going to be different for him and for anyone who was around him.

You've gotta love Peter—I do. He always said the kind of things I can picture myself saying if I were in his shoes—or in his boat. We have sorts of ways of resisting God's call to enter the depths of our lives, just like Peter did when he said, "Jesus there is no use in me going out there—I fished there all night and there are no fish to be caught there." Just one more try to convince Jesus we know more than he does!

But it was right then, after his lame excuse—when our friend Peter becomes a perfect model for discipleship. It happens in the moment when Peter responds to Jesus' call and says, "**but if you say so.**" " I really don't think you know what you are talking about, and I know there aren't any fish out there—*but if you say so*, then I'll go." Then—off he went—a bit reluctantly and hesitantly—but he went into the deep water and he found abundance like he had never imagined!

For Peter, it was an abundance that could have made him rich—he had so many fish in his boat he wouldn't have to go back out to work for weeks, maybe months. But the real abundance, Peter learned was not the financial abundance that Jesus can give, but the abundance of God's grace and love, and how much God wants to be in relationship with us.

Peter was a little freaked out when he saw all the fish that he was pulling in from his nets. It wasn't just all fish that he was so amazed over either. It was as if at that very moment, he *really* realized he was in the presence of the divine. He noticed all of a sudden that Jesus really is the Messiah, and he is merely a human being.

But look what Jesus told him, when Peter realized he was in the deep water with Jesus—that he had moved beyond a shallow relationship with his Master, Jesus. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." If you think I can help you haul in a load of fish—just wait and see the people we will catch! We'll do it together!

The catch (if you will pardon my pun) here is, though, if you want to catch other people—you have to be caught first by Jesus. You have to be willing to say—"ok—if you say so," and go out into the deep water with him.

Going into the deep water is the first step in being a follower of Jesus Christ. Going out into the deeps—the deep relationships, the deep understanding of Jesus Christ and what that means for our lives and our work is the first step in becoming the fishermen and women Christ calls each of us to be.

Jesus called Peter, a fisherman at heart, who had a heart for Jesus and for the humanity that Jesus served. Jesus is calling to you and me as well. We are called to live in the depths of our own lives and on a deeper level with him. It is in that deep water with Jesus Christ that our nets will be filled good things and our lives with abundance beyond our imagining.

Praise be to God for all his blessings and goodness in our lives! Amen.