

Sermon

Intro / Hook

It had been a long night... Heave the net over the side of the boat. Draw it back in again. Nothing. Again and again - hour after hour - with nothing to show for an aching back, a pair of sore arms, and some torn and dirty nets in need of mending... By the time the sun started to rise over the Sea of Galilee, the boats were empty and Simon Peter was exhausted. No fish to sell at the market. No fish even for his family to eat. He just wanted to tend to his nets and go back home...

Chapter 5 Context

This Lenten season, we are journeying alongside Simon Peter - his wandering story is full of ups and downs. But it all starts here... Well - actually this isn't the first time Simon Peter meets Jesus. In the last chapter, Jesus came to Simon Peter's home. Peter's mother-in-law was sick and Jesus healed her. Then the house filled up with others sick and in need of healing. We don't know how Jesus ended up at Peter's house in the first place - or what Peter thought of it all. We just know that Jesus went on his way preaching and the crowds followed him.

So it is that he ends up on the beach that morning - preaching to a crowd. Everybody has come to hear Jesus. Except for Peter that is. He's sitting there on the shore after a long night. He just wants to clean and mend his nets and then go back home...

Return to the Story

But Jesus comes along and hijacks his boat. The rabbi gets in the boat and asks Peter to put out a little ways. We've all been there. The call that comes in at the end of a long day at work. One more thing... But Peter keeps his peace and pushes out from the shore. And so instead of heading home, Peter becomes a very captive audience listening to Jesus while he mends his nets.

Jesus finishes the sermon and Simon Peter must have thought, OK - NOW, I'll go home. But Jesus tells him to put out into the deeper water and let down his nets for a catch...

You can see Simon Peter looking at Jesus in disbelief for a second - wondering what Jesus is angling at... Does the Rabbi - the healer - want to see an up close demonstration of Galilean fishing practices? Is he hungry, hoping for a bite to eat after preaching for so long? Peter just wants to go home! He's been fishing all night. Letting down the nets again, just means straining those sore muscles and having to start all over on mending and cleaning the nets...

“Jesus,” he says. “We’ve been fishing all night and haven’t caught a thing.” You can imagine the pregnant pause - waiting for Jesus to say something like, “Oh! Sorry. I didn’t realize. Never mind. I bet you’re really tired. You should go home and rest!” But Jesus doesn’t say that. He just looks at Peter and smiles and says, “Mmm hmm...”

Another pregnant pause on Peter’s part. Jesus apparently can’t take a hint. Peter is now exhausted, irritated and annoyed... But he does it. He sighs, resigned. “OK - because you say so - I’ll go out and cast - one. more. Time...”

Well then, of course you know what happens next... So many fish the boat starts to sink. He calls his partners over and they start hauling in the catch. But Peter falls down at Jesus’s knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

That Response...

Peter had seen Jesus do miracles - healing. But maybe that’s the kind of thing you expect from a holy man - a healer. He’d been preaching in the synagogues. Makes sense for a Rabbi. Fine. Well and good. All good religious work from a good religious worker.

But this is fishing. Peter’s work. Jesus isn’t playing by the usual rules. Jesus isn’t confined to good “church” work... Not just God in Sunday School and church doing God in Sunday School and church type things... This is God in our workplace and at the store - on the ballfield and in our homes...

Peter is out in the deep water - in over his head. And maybe he realizes that this Jesus is asking for more...

Hijacking

Peter hadn’t come to the beach that day seeking out Jesus like the rest of the crowd. But maybe Jesus had come seeking him out. And that idea is terrifying to Peter. Because he can see inside, knows who he really is. Jesus doesn’t know - but *he* does. He knows the doubt - the irritation and annoyance he’d had with Jesus just a few minutes ago. He knows the things inside that he’d thought - even if he didn’t say them. He knows what kind of person he really is...

“Go away from me, Lord - for I am a sinful man!”

Jesus just smiles again. “Simon, Simon, Simon... Don’t be afraid. We’ve only just begun. Before we’re through you’ll be catching more than fish...”

Jesus saw him - saw him for who he really was. Jesus knew the thoughts on the inside - but maybe he knew Peter better than Simon Peter knew himself. Peter - all in, nothing half way. Peter, who gets in the boat, and casts the net one more time, even when the voices in his head tell him to quit. Maybe Jesus was looking for people who will do the right thing - even when

they don't feel like it. Simon Peter - all in. Passionate. Flawed. Just like you and me. Exactly what Jesus was looking for.

Peter dropped everything and followed him.

Peter thinks, "Jesus, you've got the wrong idea. You don't know who I am..." Jesus says, "Oh, I see you. And I'm going to use it. Don't be afraid. From now on we're going to do this together."

Peter didn't come to the beach that day to hear Jesus. Except maybe he did - he just didn't know it yet. Jesus sought him out. First he hijacked his boat. Then he hijacked his life.

Look out. Jesus may be coming for you too...
Will you follow?

Amen.