

I'm not a great fisherman by any stretch of the imagination. I don't really even enjoy fishing all that much. But if you've ever been fishing, you've got a story. Everyone does. Like how my parents told me about the time they took me fishing and after catching a fish and taking the obligatory picture with it, told me to put it back. Only, I didn't just put it back. I grabbed it by the tail and hucked it back into the lake. They signed me up for baseball after that. Or there was the time when my sister and I were catching sunnies off the dock. I caught one that happened to swallow the hook I was using. My dad was busy at the time helping my sister with her fishing pole. While I waited, it dawned on me that fish shouldn't be out of water for too long. So I put the sunny back in the water to keep it alive. The only thing is, a fish caught on the line makes for some really easy bait for other fish. Bigger fish. And let's just say that I didn't have a sunny anymore. Now I had a bass.

Fishing is one of those things that gets passed on. You grew up with it and so you love it. Or if you're like me, you didn't really do much fishing and so you've got about a million other things you'd rather do on a nice afternoon. For someone like Simon Peter, fishing is livelihood. And it's extremely likely, almost for certain, that he grew up in a house of fishermen. His father probably fished. His grandfather probably did too. But Simon Peter has been around long enough, he's been fishing long enough, to know a thing or two. Which is why we need to pay attention to the strange things he does in this story in Luke.

First, he and his buddies are wrapping up for the day. It's been one of those days. The fish aren't biting and that means an entire day lost, pockets empty, and hungry bellies. But in spite of this, Simon Peter agrees to let Jesus borrow his boat so that he can do some preaching and teaching to the crowds. That Simon Peter would agree to this isn't really all that strange because he's met Jesus already. He knows what Jesus is about because he just came to Simon Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law.

No, the first strange thing is that after Jesus is done preaching and teaching, he asks Simon Peter and his friends if they would take him out to the deep water to catch some fish. Remember, they just unloaded, cleaned, and prepped their nets for tomorrow after a terrible day of fishing. And now Jesus wants them to go out again? I think it's fair to say that most of us wouldn't even bat an eye before turning down such a thought. I'm tired, I'm frustrated, I just want to go home. Except Simon Peter and James and John, they don't go home. They've worked all night long and caught nothing. But at Jesus' word they set out for an improbable catch.

And it actually works! They catch a ton of fish and you can imagine how their spirits must have shifted. From coming home empty-handed to what must have been one of the largest hauls they've ever had. And it leads to the second strange thing that Simon Peter does. In the midst of his crew struggling to pull up the nets, he turns to Jesus, falls to his knees, and says, "Lord, go away from me, for I am a sinful man." Which is a strange thing to say and yet also a deeply faithful thing to say. He recognizes the holiness of Jesus, the holiness of the moment he finds himself in. He recognizes that there's something special happening and he believes that whatever it is, he isn't worthy to be a part of it.

Except that Jesus wants him to be a part of it. Jesus wants Simon and James and John to join him on this revolutionary mission where miraculous things happen and people are restored to life and wholeness by the power of God. Which is perhaps the strangest thing of all. That God in Christ would dare to call a couple of fishermen to help change the world. And that these fishermen would dare to follow. They just brought in the catch of a lifetime and they leave it all behind. They leave behind security and comfort and reliability. They leave behind their lives as they have known them for so long. They leave it all behind. Because Jesus calls them to something new. Jesus calls them to be a part of God's mission. Jesus calls them to trust.

My friends in Christ, the world is full of voices – people and things that call for our attention and devotion. Things that actually make a lot of sense. But the world won't always be this way. The things we find security in now won't always be secure. The things we hope for will leave us disappointed. Many of the things we find life in will prove to be illusions of a full life. But in a brief moment on that boat, Simon Peter, James, and John are able to hear the one voice, amid all the voices of the world, that calls them to true security, true hope, true life. And they follow it. Even when it doesn't make sense.

So with all the noise of life, will we hear God's call to each and every one of us? When life pulls and pushes and urges us to keep playing this game, will we heed the call of the one who calls us to be game changers? Will we trust the one whose promise is sure, the one who can lead us into fullness of life? Caught up in the love of God, will we join the mission for the life of the world God so loves? Because we've been called; called to tell the story of what God has done in Christ. Called to tell the story of what God is still doing in the world today in and through regular people like you and me. Friends, it's time to go fishing. Amen.