

*Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.*

I like to think of it as a little cove, hills climbing on three sides, protecting from the wind. There the boats were tied. Simon's boat (we know him as Peter), James' and John's boat also. On that day when the crowd grew around Jesus, and people were having trouble hearing, the cove and hills were like an amphitheater. So Jesus asked Simon for the use of the boat as a floating pulpit, a place from which to be heard over the sounds of wind and waves and gulls. The people spread on those hills and listened. What Simon did on that day is what later a man would do in providing a donkey for the ride on the Palm Sunday parade, and another man would do in providing a room for that last supper. Truly nothing has been kept by God for God's own use. Everything has been loaned out to us.

But sometimes God needs the use of what God has given us: a manger, a tomb, food for the hungry, clothing for the naked. I hope that we will always share as Simon did that day.

But Jesus has more planned for Simon. "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch," he commanded. Though they had fished all night for nothing, Simon trusted Jesus more than his own experience.

Faith is like that. Jesus speaks and his word is obeyed. The one with two coats shares with the one who has none - the victorious people rebuilds the cities of the conquered enemy - brothers and sisters forgive and are reconciled. Even when we have fished all night for nothing, at Jesus word we let down the nets once more.

In an instant the nets were so full of fish that they were breaking. But instead of doing a victory dance *Simon fell down at Jesus knees pleading, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."*

We are used to living with God safely at a distance, locked up in heaven, or on the altar, or confined to a Sunday morning. But Simon knew God had come to the place where profanity erupted when the nets got tangled, where time was passed telling jokes you wouldn't tell to the children. God has come to the place where sometimes deals were made in cash so no report would be made to the IRS.

Peter was afraid. But instead of the lightning of judgement from heaven, or even a lecture on moral living, Jesus spoke these words: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

Jesus was choosing Peter. No interview, no checking of his references, no trial period to see if he would work out, Jesus simply chose Peter just as Jesus did when you were baptized. Jesus has chosen you for "people catching." Just the person you are is the one he needs. You may say to yourself, "I am not good enough, I do not know enough, I don't have time enough." But Jesus still has chosen you for "people catching."

Peter followed. We don't read that he changed his language, became a better person, became a model for other believers, on the contrary everything we know about Peter seems to indicate the opposite. He was the one who fell asleep when Jesus asked him to stay awake and watch. He was the one who drew the sword and cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest when Jesus was arrested. He was the one who swore as he declared he did not know Jesus. But he was also the one privileged to preach and lead the church from Pentecost on.

Will you follow as he did? Will you share Jesus with the people of your life? Will you tell of Jesus, victorious over death, forgiving our sins, promising believers eternal life?. Will you tell of the Father, waiting for our return, listening for our voice in prayer, providing all we need from day to day? Will you tell of the Spirit of God, who can breathe faith and hope and love into our hearts? If you will the nets will be filled and God will be praised, and you and your neighbor will be blessed.