

Jesus Is Calling

“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” **Luke 5:4 NIV**

Most people are familiar with the story of Jesus calling his first disciples. The most exciting part for many of us is when Simon and his colleagues cast their nets down and catch such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. I know some of you love fishing and correct me if I am wrong, but: the best thing that can happen to a fisherman is to have a productive fishing day. Nobody likes to go out fishing and come back empty handed. If we all were fishermen, I am sure that we all would like to have supernatural-catch days every single day.

We love to have great results and there is nothing wrong with that desire, but what happens sometimes is the large number of fish mesmerizes us and we forget to take the proper steps and learn the lesson Jesus is giving us on how to have a big catch.

Do we, as a church, want to have a huge catch? Do you, in your personal lives, want to have a “huge catch” (whatever that means)?

We know that the general idea of this story is *Jesus calling his disciples to catch people instead of fish*, but what I want to show you this morning is the sequence of events that took place before the call to fish for men and women was made. I want you to see how Jesus is gradually helping these fishermen to see the plans he had for them; great plans that required these simple men to embrace a new way of life. I want you to see how Jesus is helping these individuals reach a new level of understanding in order for them to respond in a positive way to the call of the Master. How is Jesus going to accomplish this? Simple:

1. By leading them to experience the most productive catch they have ever had in their professional lives, and also
2. By showing them how to have a big catch.

At the outset of the story we learn that Peter put into the service of Jesus everything he had. The Bible says, *“Jesus got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.”* I think that this is the first step we all have to take before we can experience a huge catch. We need to put everything we have and are to the service of Jesus. This is a crucial step. Putting your life at the service of Jesus means that you are going to invest your time, strength and resources the way Jesus wants you to do it.

We can see that Peter is truly putting all he has and is to the service of the Master. Jesus is going to ask Peter to do something out of the ordinary and Peter, the disciple-to-be, is going to follow through with Jesus’ invitation. Jesus said to Peter, *“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch”* (v. 4). Now, you may be thinking what is unusual about Jesus’ call?

There are many things that are atypical in this invitation. The call of Jesus is innovative, revolutionary, and challenges the conventional fishing practices of those days. How do we know

that? Let us take a look at the first part of Peter's answer, "*Master, we've worked hard **all night** and haven't caught anything.*"

It seems that these men were used to fishing during nighttime, and this idea makes sense for several reasons:

1. to avoid direct contact with the sun to prevent sunburn,
2. fish get more active at night and move closer to the shore as the water stays warmer where is not too deep.
 - a. This means that Peter and his companions most likely were fishing near the shore. It is believed that this was a common practice among fishermen. As I said, with his request Jesus is challenging the conventional fishing practices of his days. Jesus is asking these professional fishermen to do things differently, to change their practices, to go against their usual way of doing their work and try new things. Jesus is inviting these men to respond to a seemingly crazy invitation.

I guess that at least one of them thought that Jesus was a great teacher, and an engaging speaker, but he did not know anything about fishing because with his request, Jesus was violating the basic fishing rules of the time. I dare to say that at least one of them thought, "That's not the way is supposed to be done" or "We've never done it that way". Does it sound familiar?

Imagine what would have happened if Peter and his coworkers had refused to respond to Jesus' invitation in a positive way, only because such invitation did not align with their experience or way of thinking. For sure they would have missed the catch of their lives, and what is more important, they would have missed being part of the movement that is changing the world.

Dear church, I am convinced that Jesus is asking us to "*put out into deep waters.*" How can we make this command ours? What does it mean for us, people who don't fish for a living, to "*put out into deep waters and let down the nets for a catch*"? How can we practically respond to the call of Jesus?

I do believe that one of the things that our Lord wants us to learn as a church is that we need to let go of our preconceived ideas, paradigms and preferences in order to carry out our God-given mission effectively.

I am convinced that Jesus is pointing out that being a disciple is not a matter of tradition, but of obedience. I am convinced that God is inviting us to respond to his call in new and creative ways. God wants us to discard practices that keep us busy but are not productive. God is calling us to get rid of the status quo mentality. God does not want us to survive; he wants us to thrive.

Kodak was once the leading company of photography in the film-based business model. The company dominated 90% of the American market and there was a point in time that no one could compete with Kodak. But the greatness of Kodak came to an end. The company was forced to file bankruptcy in January 2012 because digital cameras destroyed Kodak's film-based business model.

You may think that Kodak's experience is repeated all the time in the marketplace, but there is something unique about Kodak's story. It is a fact that Kodak missed opportunities in digital photography, but what you may not know is that the digital technology was first invented by an engineer working for Kodak.

Steve Sasson, the Kodak engineer who invented the first digital camera in 1975, characterized the initial corporate response to his invention this way: "they told me, 'that's cute—but don't tell anyone about it. It is filmless photography and we cannot afford to let go our film-based business model.'" From our privileged perspective of looking at history (43 years later after this event), we can say that this response led a great company to economic failure. The lesson we learn from Kodak is that many times **the desire to keep what we have is the greatest threat to what we can become.**

Peter and the rest decided to put their common knowledge and way of thinking to the side and learn a new way of fishing instead. It is amazing to see that the first lesson Jesus taught to his prospect disciples was about breaking ineffective patterns and trying new things. I am pretty sure that the almost disciples learned the lesson, and this is why they chose to fish for people.

Of course they had mixed feelings. They were scared and amazed, but they had also learned the lesson and were ready to accept a new challenge. "*Come, follow me,*" Jesus said, "*and I will send you out to fish for people*" (Mark 1:17 NIV). The Gospels of Mark and Matthew say, "*At once they left their nets and followed him.*"

A most natural response to the call of Jesus would have been an invitation from Peter to be partners in the fishing business. Peter could have easily extended an invitation to Jesus: "Teacher, I don't know how you did what you just did, but that doesn't matter. You got skills for this fishing business, and if you want to become the captain of this crew, you've got yourself a deal. I think together we can become really profitable."

We know this wasn't Peter's response. Peter left behind a known reality for an unknown future, as he responded to the call of Jesus.

Jesus is calling us to:

1. Put at his service what we are and have. In other words, Jesus is calling us to put at his service our whole selves.
2. Break away from those practices that keep us busy but are not productive. For instance, if coming to worship is just a self-fulfilling, entertaining habit and not a spiritual practice that helps you grow closer to God and lead others into a relationship with Christ, then you have to revise your reason for coming to church.
3. Cast aside excuses such as "That's not the way it is supposed to be done" or "We've never done it that way".
4. Try new things in order to serve better as agents of God's kingdom.
5. Leave behind a known reality for a more fruitful future.

6. Fish in new ways. This is using what you have in fresh and creative ways. Peter and the others did not get new tools or find a new fishing place. They used the same boat and the same nets just in a different way, the way Jesus had commanded them.

Jesus is calling. How are you going to respond to Jesus' call?