

N U R T U R E
F A I T H
with
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Taking Jesus Seriously

READ: Luke 5:8 (Common English Bible)

“When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Leave me, Lord, for I’m a sinner!’”

REFLECT:

Recently, I began working with a personal trainer after nearly five years of absence from a gym. Stepping into the gym I saw muscle tone where I lacked muscle tone. I saw the absence of fat where I had much. Here were women and men, of all ages, in nearly perfect physical form, radiant, confident, full of energy. I nearly turned and walked out the door. The comparison of these Olympian-like gods and goddesses to my aging, late 50’s body disheartened me. Each person in the gym that morning disturbed me. I did not belong to this community. I cannot rise to that. Instinctively, I wanted to escape their company.

Luke’s Gospel tells us that this was precisely Simon Peter’s response when it dawned upon his consciousness who Jesus was, “...he (Peter) fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Leave me, Lord, for I’m a sinner!’” Peter had come to know Jesus, welcomed Jesus as a guest in his home, and was welcomed by Jesus into discipleship. But, it was after Peter began to see the kind of person Jesus was, and the astonishing work Jesus did, that Peter realized – in both a stark and unsettlingly manner – that Peter stood in extraordinary company. Peter wasn’t simply in the presence of a god-like individual. Peter was in the presence of God!

Simon Peter was right - right to understand so clearly and profoundly that satisfied admiration, adoration, and worship are insufficient in the reality of the divine presence of God. From the depths of Peter’s whole being was released a cry, “Leave me, Lord.” The divine presence disturbed Peter. He did not belong on that scale of life. Peter could not rise to that. Instinctively, Peter looked for an escape. Peter took Jesus seriously.

Many people have pretty much reduced their Christianity to an admiration of Jesus. Such a response is easy, and natural. Yet, that is all the Christianity they have – admiration. But that is not enough. To truly grasp the divine presence is unsettling. It is to become aware of just how far we are from that measure of life. And, unable to rise, we seek an escape. After approximately seven sessions with my personal trainer, Bill Dorton, he asked me to perform a chin-up. I could not. Not one. Again, I wanted to escape. And then Bill spoke, “I’ll get you there.” And it was enough to remain, struggling to become more. Jesus did the same for Peter, “Don’t be afraid.” It was Jesus promising Peter, “I’ll get you there!” That day, Peter left everything and followed Jesus.

