

A Sermon for Dayspring Baptist Church
By Chris Fillingham
“Because You Say So”
Luke 5:1-11
January 29, 2017

It has been a long, discouraging night for those fishermen. Remember, fishing wasn't just a sport for these guys. It was their livelihood. And it was hard, exhausting work.

They didn't have nice rods and reels with flashy lures or power bait to make their catch. And they most certainly would never have thought of going fishing as a vacation or a way to go relax in a boat.

No, it was hard work... at times miserable work...
and on nights like this... kind of depressing work. “We've worked hard all night and caught nothing,” Simon says.

Of course, they'd been at it all night because night was the best time to catch the fish. Once the sun is out and the air starts warming up the fish are more likely to go into hiding.

So these guys made a career out of working the night shift. They went out at sundown and stayed out until sunrise... hoping to bring in a haul.

They'd row about 100 yards out into the lake. Then they'd work to drop the net from the side of the boat, one section of the net at a time... creating a large circle in which to trap the fish in.

Their nets, by the way, were massive. One source I read this week said they were over 100 feet across. Another said they were likely 500 feet across and 25 feet deep... which is why it took a couple of boats of men to manage it.

Once they got the net in place they'd start beating the water with their paddles to scare the fish into the center of the net... where they would be caught. After awhile of this, the boats would work together to pull in whatever was caught.

It was a pretty long and tough process... out there on the lake in the middle of the night... hands wet, backs sore.

But these guys were used to it. They were fishermen. This is what they did to make a living.

This was the family business.

They'd likely learned it from their father who learned it from his father. That's how it worked back then. You always learned the family trade, passing it down from generation to generation.

So these guys were pros and knew what they were doing.

It's what they did most nights of their life since they were old enough to learn:

dropping the nets...
pounding the water
pulling in these heavy soaking nets back into the boats...
untangling them...
hoping for a catch

But not this night. This night there was nothing but a bunch of junk caught in the net... and so, just before sunrise, they started the long process of cleaning up.

You see fishing didn't end with simply rowing back to the shore and calling it a night. After they fished, they'd start the work of untangling this 500 feet of netting... and try to lay it out on the shore to clean it.

Because... these nets were made of interwoven linen threads and if they didn't clean it each night, it would start to rot and disintegrate... which would ruin a fisherman. It's not like they could just pick up another one at the Bass Pro Shop.

So by the time Jesus came down to the lakeshore that morning... and the crowds were pressing in on him... the fishermen were already going about the long, tedious process of wrapping up for the night. "They were washing their nets," it says in verse 2.

Most folks back in Luke's day, when this was written, knew exactly what that meant. The fishermen had already worked to untangle their nets...

They had laid them out in the sun.

They spent the morning hours working through all 500 feet, cleaning out scraps of wood and weeds that had gotten caught in the net overnight and then washing the nets down.

Making repairs to any parts that had broken places
so that it could be dried out and then folded back up and
put back in the boat so that it was ready the next night.

There was a lot of work... wrapped up in that one little sentence. "The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets," Luke writes

So yes, by the time Jesus and the crowds get there, you bet they were exhausted.

Jesus sees the boats and decides to climb in one. He can't exactly talk to the crowds when they are all pushing up against him. And so he calls over to Simon... who is busy cleaning the nets...

"Hey Simon, can you row me out a bit from the shore?"

Now I imagine Simon's not excited about going back out, but he owes Jesus at this point. You see, at the end of chapter 4 Jesus had cured his mother-in-law...

So Simon doesn't say anything at this point. He just does it. "It's the least I can do..." he thinks.

By now the nets must be pretty much dry because we know they ended up in the boat. And then Simon begins to row Jesus out away from the shore so that Jesus could teach the crowd.

And Simon sat there... listening as Jesus gave his sermon that morning. Simon listened with his stomach growling and muscles aching. But he listened... as this man, this teacher, this rabbi; who had healed his mother-in-law began to talk about God... and God's ways.

Simon wasn't a theologian by any means, but there was something about the way Jesus taught that grabbed ahold of him. Jesus' words spoke to a deep place in him... it was like a breath of fresh air.

And Jesus' presence... was so palpable... that Simon was glad he was in the boat with Jesus. Once he was out there, I imagine Simon was grateful to be asked.

That's how it was being around Jesus....

It's why the crowds pressed in on him.

There was something so life giving about his presence,
something so appealing about his words...

the crowds couldn't help themselves...
and neither could Simon.

Well, finally Jesus finishes up and Simon gets ready to row back to shore. But Jesus... has something else in mind.

"Simon, row out farther... into the deep waters... and drop your nets for a catch."

Now we know that Jesus was a masterful teacher... and often he spoke multiple layers of meaning. So I have a hunch that Jesus' invitation has more than one meaning to it.

Sure, it was a very practical invitation to go fishing,
but more than that.

Jesus is challenging Peter to go out to the "deep waters" with him. In other words, Simon could stay in the shallows with Jesus... where he's enamored with Jesus' teaching... and grateful for what Jesus has done for him and his family...

Or... he can go out to the "deep waters"
to the place where he'll have to let go of his own life
to the place where he'll be opened up to the same life that is in Jesus

out in the deep,
where he can learn to live and fish in the
unfathomable mysteries.

“Row out farther Simon... into the deep waters... and drop your nets for a catch.” It’s an invitation to a deeper life in God... where your nets are filled in ways you can’t understand, while you’re still in the shallows with Jesus.

Simon though... he doesn’t hear that deeper meaning. He’s not Simon Peter yet. He hasn’t become a disciple yet. He can’t understand Jesus on that level yet. He just knows that Jesus is telling him to go fishing again.

And you can imagine what he’s thinking at this point. I mean Simon is the expert fisherman here, not Jesus. Jesus grew up the son of a carpenter.
And Simon knows the fish just aren’t out today. They’d already tried all night.
And even if they were, it’s at least mid-morning by now. You can’t catch fish at this time of the day. If Jesus were a fisherman, he’d know that.
And Simon is exhausted.
He’s been spinning his wheels already and didn’t have anything to show for it.

Not to mention, the nets have already been cleaned and if he casts them back out they’ll have to go through all that again, and for what?

He’s probably shaking his head... when he says, “Look Master, we’ve worked hard all night and caught nothing.”

And I wonder if there is a pause after that period in Peter’s speech. If he says it... and Jesus just looks back at him... with his inviting and commanding eyes... and so Simon gives in.

“But... because you say so, Lord, I will.”

[pause]

And of course you know the rest of the story. We heard about the miraculous catch of fish. But you know... what I find most miraculous in this story isn’t the load of fish, it’s Simon’s willingness.... just because it’s Jesus asking. *“But because you say so, Lord, I will.”*

When it doesn’t make any sense,
when he’s exhausted from spinning his wheels
when it looks like a complete waste of time
when he’d much rather be doing a hundred other things...

And still, he surrenders in this very simple obedience, “because you say so, Lord, I will.”

And as we sit here this morning, thinking about our church and its ministry and all that it requires of us...

thinking about our particular lives... and the challenges we face... and the callings God has given us.

I wonder what you're having a hard time saying yes to these days... what deep water is Jesus inviting you to, but you're just not sure?

Is he asking you to cast out your nets that you've already put away?

In your worship guide this morning, you should have received a small card. I want to invite you to take a few moments and simply reflect... write down,

1. what is Jesus calling you to
2. and what is holding you back... from being all in the deep waters with Christ?

Maybe you're as exhausted as Simon?

Maybe there are some disappointments?

Things haven't worked for you like you hoped.

Maybe there are some fears.

Maybe it feels pointless or meaningless.

Is there some cost you're afraid of?

What will it take for you to be able to say with Simon, "because you say so, Lord, I will"?

Write them down as Stephanie begins to play... and when you come forward for communion, I'm going to invite you to bring your card and to give those things to Christ...

Music—1 minute.

Words of Institution:

This morning you are invited to come and receive communion direction from this table. Christ is your host... offering you the bread and cup.

There are 2 stations here, one for each side.

Come forward down these center aisles and bring your card with you.

When you get to the table I want to invite you to pause and speak the words that Peter spoke: "because you say so, Lord, I will." Then place your card in the basket. ***And I want to invite you to speak those words out loud.***

Don't just say it in your heart.

Something more happens when we engage our bodies.

Speak it out loud as you give your hesitations to God.

“Because you say so, Lord, I will.”

Once you’ve done that, move to your side of the table,
take the bread which is the body of Christ broken for you
and then drink the cup of commitment.

Christ is here; meet him now at this table,
Christ is here, inviting you to the deep waters
Come and receive the gift he wants to give you this day.

Amen.

Screen:

What deep waters is Christ inviting you to?
What is holding you back?