

Into Deep Waters

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 2/10/19
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Nobody is on top of the world every day. Everyone has ups and downs. Sometimes life moves along briskly and we accomplish what we set out to do and we meet our personal goals. And sometimes things get stuck. We look failure in the face day after day. Sometimes, life comes to a halt.

Today we hear about three discouraged people – four actually if you count Andrew – Simon Peter’s brother who appears in other accounts of this story.

They were fishers – not recreational fishers, but workers – small business men if you want to call them that – whose families went hungry if there was no catch. Jesus had met them before – when they were associated with John the Baptist – in fact Jesus had been to Simon Peter’s house and cured his mother-in-law of a high fever.

It was a very bad day for the fishers. They had fished all night and caught nothing. Now it was morning, and the men were mending and washing their nets so they’d be ready for the next night’s work.

There was a crowd on the beach near where they were working. A big crowd. They were listening to Jesus – pressing in upon him. Jesus is in the water – out from the crowd. Suddenly Jesus steps into Simon’s boat. “Move out a little way from the shore,” he tells Peter, and he does.

Finally, when Jesus is finished teaching and the crowds go home, Jesus turns to Simon and says, “Put out into the deep water, and let your nets down for a catch.”

Pretty audacious, wouldn’t you think? Jesus, a landlubber, to tell a professional fisherman how to do him business. Very audacious – and Peter answers Jesus by explaining the facts of life to him.

“It won’t do any good,” Peter says, “We have worked all night – and have caught nothing. There’s no point to it.”

Have you ever been there? You do your best. You work hard. And the results were zero. A project you have worked on just will not pan out. The harder you try - the less you produce.

Have you ever been in the place where all your wisdom tells you, just give up?

The last thing you want to hear – the last thing you need to hear when you’re in this position are the words “try harder.”

Peter and Andrew, James and John were not stupid men. They knew the lake; the ledges where the fish congregated; the kind of weather you had to have to bring in a good catch. Their families had been working the lake for generations. They knew the time to fish – and where to fish – and they had gone fishing – at the right time – and in the right place – and come up empty.

“Try over there,” Jesus says. “Over there in the deep water – let your nets down for a catch.”

“Master, we have worked all night long...we have done everything we should have done, everything we were taught to do by our fathers and their fathers before them, but we’ve caught nothing ... yet if you say so, I will let down my nets yet again.”

Why Simon agrees we do not know. Perhaps he did so because he was learning to trust Jesus – perhaps he did it to humor him – perhaps it was because of something in Jesus’ tone of voice. Whatever the reason, Peter agrees to do what Jesus asks of him.

You know the story from here. They threw the nets out from Simon’s boat and was engulfed by so many fish that their nets began to break. Indeed they caught so many fish that when John and James came alongside and helped load the boats – the boats began to sink.

I want you to remember something today: I want you to remember what Simon Peter initially said to Jesus at the beginning when he said, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught

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anything.”

What Simon said to Jesus, in effect, was: “I know my business. We’ve tried it. We’ve worked hard all night and nothing happened, so what’s the point.”

Undoubtedly, my friends, we, like Peter, do know our business. But sometimes we know it too well.

We believe that what is being asked of us will not pan out – we don’t want to risk another disappointment – one more failure.

I know people whose lives are miserable because for years they have refused to risk such failure – such disappointment.

They have resources, but do not use them; skills, but do not develop them; dreams, but do not follow them; gifts, but do not share them.

They know what is what – they know their business and they are not about to be instructed by anyone else.

They know who they are – and who others are – and what the situation is – and they are locked in by that knowledge, afraid to risk – afraid to reach out, to go beyond the familiar, because they know there is no point in going beyond the place where fish are normally caught.

Put out into the deep waters and let down your nets for a catch. But what’s the point?

The point is this: Sometimes we need to listen to another point of view. Sometimes we need to risk one more failure, to go and do what our common sense tells us cannot be done and to try what we know will not work.

Sometimes we just need to head out into the deep waters and let down the nets for no better reason than Jesus has asked us to do so. Jesus came so that each one of us might have an abundant life; a full and rich life, a life in which we know and experience and share the love of God – a love which conquers the sting of death, and ensures that in the end our labors are not in vain, no matter how many days our nets might come up empty.

To achieve that life – we have to do one thing – we have to recognize that our knowledge and our experience is not equal to that of God’s.

As Isaiah and Simon Peter each acknowledge in their own ways, God is greater than they and that they are in need of God’s grace and God’s love, so too we must acknowledge our need – our need and God’s ability and desire to meet that need.

Our nets may come up empty for many days in a row but if we are open to God – if we are willing to listen and to try the new things he suggests – if we are willing to venture out to the deep water – our nets in the end may be filled and filled so abundantly that our very nets will threaten to break.

God is able – and willing to help us. God is able – and God calls us to share that message, the message that through listening and following, there comes an abundance from where before there was nothing.

Paul writes at one point, “...I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” God’s grace makes all things new – it makes us who we are supposed to be.

Live out these words that God gives to you here in the scriptures and here – in your hearts – for as you venture out into the deep waters, and labor hard to let down and bring up the nets, you will discover the fullness in life that will make all the difference