

## Luke 5:1-10

### **Fear of Inadequacy**

The one thing I am not is a fisherman. I have almost no understanding of what is necessary to catch one fish let alone a great haul of fish. I have carried a fishing rod, but I have never actually used one, so this story of Peter is likely one of the one I have the least understanding about when it comes to the location and circumstances. However, I do get some things. No one wants their work to be unproductive. A fisherman is out to catch fish, a teacher wants to teach, a doctor, nurse, or PSW desires to bring health to the body and mind of those in their care. A minister hopes that those with whom they spend time would be strengthened in their spirit. A tradesperson, artist, crafter, musician, or dancer wants to create something that is meaningful.

Well, at least that is what one hopes for. There are so many people who do not find meaning and purpose in their lives that it is truly distressing. It also becomes increasingly difficult as we age and we discover that what defined us in our working lives is no longer. Then our physical ability to move and be helpful to others, or to even be able to be physically present in the community becomes limited. It can be frustrating to say the least.

So maybe we can relate to Peter and the other disciples in this story as they have worked all night to no avail. No fish. No income. Just a long night of disappointment. They are busy cleaning up their nets when Jesus decides to commandeer Simon's boat and teach the crowd from that vantage point. Jesus needed a little space. Then after a while Jesus tells Simon Peter to let down the net again. Of course, Peter explains that there is little possibility of anything happening as they have already worked all night, but rather than continue to argue the point, Peter gives in and sets the nets. We are told what happens next...this great catch of fish...is so big that it nearly busts the nets and starts sinking two boats while every available hand is needed to get the haul in.

Now this is a miracle story, but what happens next is something to take note of. Peter's response is not, "Wow! Thank you. That is amazing." But rather we are told, "Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'" (v8). Not what one might have expected to hear in the moment, but then again, Peter may have just realized that he is truly in the presence of someone with power. Power over people and power over nature itself.

This is not the first time Peter has watch Jesus in action. He has already hosted Jesus in his home and watched as his mother-in-law was healed from a high fever. Not only that, others who were sick were brought there to be healed that night. (Luke 4:38-42) For some reason though, this encounter at on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret,

where a crowd was pressing in and all watching witness this great haul of fish, well this has really hit at Peter's core. His response to witnessing Jesus at work this day, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

You might think that Jesus would say something like, "Your sin is forgiven" but nope he instead says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." (v10).

Could it be that Peter recognized his own inadequacy when faced with the power of God and thought it best to let Jesus know that he should just leave rather than bother with someone like him? Yet Jesus saw the value in this humble fisherman. You see, though the pictures in our children's bibles and stories always have the fisherman looking clean with nice robes, on top of that looking rather Romanesque, that is far from what would have been. Think dirty after a long night's work, possibly a little or a lot stinky because of working with fish and fish nets, and poor. Fishermen were low on the rungs of society's ladder. They made little money and shared their catch with those with power.

These are the men, Peter and James and John, whom Jesus called to go with him. Later he gets Matthew, a tax collector, on board as well. These are not people with power or prestige or influence. They are about as ordinary as you can get. Peter in particular was aware of his inadequacy and it scared him. Jesus scared him. Peter felt unworthy of what Jesus had done with providing the catch of fish. He may have coupled this moment with the healing he had witnessed in his own home days before. Whatever was going on, Peter did not feel capable, or worthy of Jesus' presence in his life.

Peter, those fishing with him, and all those present that had followed Jesus as he taught, witnessed all that was going on. They heard the conversation, watched the catch happen, and all were amazed, but it also made them afraid. It was too much. Too much power, to much presence. Just too much. And so, Peter cowered in front of such power.

The difference is that the power of Jesus is love, care, compassion, and an invitation to be a part of what God is up to in the world. Peter was only used to power that was corrupt, harmful, and controlling.

Many times we think we are inadequate and so stop short of doing what we may feel called to do. We don't feel we have the right gifts, we can't find the words, we don't have enough pull. It can also be that we might feel that we are being asked to give up something that we would rather not give up. It is not likely that God is asking you or I to give up our homes, or our job, or even our retirement, though it may be that for some. It is more likely that our fear is that God will ask us to give up control and let God take the lead in our lives.

It may be our fear of inadequacy, we just don't feel like we are enough, that we have anything of value to offer. It may be our fear that God will ask too much of us. We may have many excuses for asking God to just leave thank you very much. One might

choose to come to church and participate in worship, might even volunteer, because, well at least here everyone thinks about God and it is safe. But ask us to leave this building and carry our faith out into the world, even risking that God would value us enough to be invited into God's work in the world, and that becomes terrifying.

Could one become curious about God in their lives? Curious about how God values you even with your fear, your inadequacies, with all that you are and says, "I invite you to be part of what I am up to in the world." Trust me, Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit know what they are working with and desire that you be a part of their work anyway. It is through us ordinary people, with all our flaws, challenges, struggles, and sin, that God's extraordinary love finds its way into the world. God is asking you to go with God. Do not be afraid. Follow Jesus and you will be part of something greater than yourself. Jesus is asking "Will you come and follow me into the world?" This is the invitation, "Will you spread the message of God and God's love into the world?"

These questions are asked as we live in Christ, through Christ and with Christ." Amen.