

Copyright Geist Christian Church, February 18, 2024

Series: Wandering Hearts: Figuring Out Faith with Peter

Sermon Title: Jesus Seeks

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Text: [Luke 5:1-11](#)

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During this season of Lent, we are looking at the life of Jesus through the lens of one of his most well-known disciples, Peter. When we read of Peter, he embodies a modern day disciples: steadfast and unsteady, friend and betrayer, follower and wanderer

Peter has this wandering heart. His faith journey is not polished or linear or perfect but is always tethered to the love of God. By following Peter's journey, we see the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a human trying to figure it all out.

At the beginning, Peter has a different name, Simon. You will see him referred to as Simon, Peter, and Simon Peter. When he meets Jesus and becomes a follower of Jesus, Jesus gives him a new name, "cephas" (kay-fas), which means, Rock in Aramaic, and Peter in the Greek language, which is why he is primarily known as Peter to us today. Many will call Peter the most brash, the most outspoken, and the most human of all of Jesus' disciples. And no other person, except Paul, played quite the role Peter did in carrying out Jesus' mission in the world.

Peter was a fisher person by trade, working with his brothers and his father. People tended to think of people who fished for a living as peasants, but it was a good living, a comfortable living. Peter and his brothers fished around the Sea of Galilee, a place where Jesus spent a lot of time. He loves the water, like many of us, he loves being around the water.

The call of the disciples is not the first time that Jesus met Simon because Luke tells us a chapter earlier that he heals Simon's mother-in-law from what is described as a "high fever." Following that, Simon is at work, his small business, working hard, and he encounters Jesus once again:

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word.² Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets.³ Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.⁴ When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

⁵ Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

⁶ So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting.⁷ They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.⁸ When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!"⁹ Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught.¹⁰ James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too.

Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people."¹¹ As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus. (Luke 5:1-11 CEB)

What stands out to me about this text is that you have a rabbi giving fishing advice, fishing lessons to people who earn their living fishing. The crowd is pressing in on Jesus, he gets into Peter's boat, teaches the crowds from the boat, and then tells Peter what he needs to do.

I enjoy fishing; however, my track record suggests that I don't really enjoy catching anything. When we are at the beach at Tybee Island off the coast of Georgia, we enjoy going to the pier to watch people fish. You can see the frustration as they drop their lines into the water time after time and don't catch anything.

So you can imagine someone who fishes for a living when a religious teacher tells him to row out a little farther. "Sure thing, we've been here all night and have caught nothing, but if you insist."

Maybe Peter is a bit like us. He knows Jesus healed his mother-in-law and perhaps he has heard about Jesus being the Messiah, but he is like us. He's skeptical. "What does he know about fishing?"

Maybe when someone asks you to try something and you know it won't work, you do it to prove your point that it won't work. Maybe that is what Peter is doing. "Because you say so, I'll row out and drop the nets."



Dr. Terrence Lester leads a nonprofit called Love Beyond Walls, which advocates for the unhoused. He talks about meeting, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a man named Demetri. He asked Demetri what was on his mind and Demetri said to him, “I believe I’m going to die because I have nowhere to wash my hands. How I am supposed to wash my hands when I have nowhere to go.”

He knew Demetri was right. While the rest of us were practicing social distancing, society had long been practicing social distancing from those experiencing homelessness. The one thing we could all do, wash our hands, was going to be pretty difficult for Demetri.



Out of Demetri’s statement and story came a national campaign called “Love Sinks In” to provide handwashing access and stations to the unhoused. While many were rushing to purchase the last of the toilet paper off of store shelves, some stood with individuals without access to soap and water. Seeking out these individuals. Fishing for people.

Demetri’s statement was a call to action for Dr. Lester. It led him to seek. That is what Jesus does for people. He pushes him, nudges him just a little further out. To seek something greater.

I believe that one of the challenges we have in faith is that we don’t really want Jesus to seek us out. We want a comfortable version of our faith, even if we find we aren’t catching much where we are.

We don’t really want to be pushed out any further, whether out of fear or complacency or something else. We don’t want to reconsider the way we see ourselves or see and interact with others. We don’t want to be pushed on the way we see the world.

We rather fish all night and catch nothing than take a risk, to take a chance on Jesus, to take a chance on the call of God.

Picture the way Jesus speaks to Peter: Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch.”

Some people don’t catch a lot of fish because they don’t go into deep water. Some don’t grow in faith because they refuse to go out into deep water.

Shallow water is pleasant. Deep water is full of things we could be afraid of.

I don’t know how much Jesus knows about fishing, but he does know a good bit about abundant living, about spiritual living. The faith we seek is not going to be found in shallow water. It’s such a temptation, and there are plenty of expressions of church where one can swim in shallow water, easy answers, and a closed off way of experiencing life and the world.

That is not the faith or the Christian expression that Jesus wants from his followers. If it was, Jesus would have simply told Peter- stay here, continue to fish where you are, and you aren’t catching anything.

Jesus loves you too much to leave you in shallow water. Jesus cares too much for all of God’s children and for God’s world for us to stay in shallow water. We know this because as he tells Peter to go he says to him, “prepare for a catch.” This is a turning point for Peter. He has a good life, but everything is about to change. He will leave his home, his business, and his way of life in order to follow Jesus into a new calling.

Imagine that you are in that boat with Jesus. You are standing in that boat where Peter is standing and Jesus is seeking you. You have a good life, but Jesus is calling you deeper, telling you to “prepare for a catch.”

What might you leave behind?

How might your new path unfold?

What will God do with your life?

Let Us Pray:

Lord, we want to be your disciples. At times, we are reluctant. Sometimes, we make excuses. Forgive us for missed opportunities. We offer our lives, our gifts, our time, and our influence to you. Help us to move into deeper water with you, for the sake of our lives, for the sake of the world. Amen.

