

An Amazing Invitation to Deep Water

Luke 5:1-11

First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois
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A lot of people don't like backseat drivers and armchair quarterbacks, and one could argue that Jesus is setting himself up as an expert in a field in which he's had no training. *Hey, Simon Peter, take your boat out to deep water and cast out your nets.*

Peter says, in fewer words, "I'm a fisherman and I've been at it all night long. The fish aren't biting. Some days are like that. This is one of them. Going out in deep water won't make a difference. I'm a professional."

The words we actually have record of are: "Master we have worked all night long, but have caught nothing."

We have every reason to believe that Simon knows best when it comes to fishing. And yet, and yet. He'll do as Jesus asks.

Why?

Why do what Jesus asks when he's not a fisherman? What do carpenters know about fishing?

Maybe Simon's curious. Maybe he doesn't have anything to lose. Maybe he likes Jesus and is just being considerate. Maybe his mother taught him to be polite.

You don't know a thing about fishing, and yet, if you say so, I'll do as you ask.

Maybe Simon is being open-minded. Curious. Even hopeful. Maybe Simon knows he doesn't know it all. Maybe Simon has enough energy at the end of a long, long night of fishing to give something new a try, to risk, to take a chance. Is this attitude suggestive of a good future disciple? Could we, helpfully, try it on for size?

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And what about us? What about our track-record of being a disciple?

Somebody in the church says to us, "Hey, let's try this new thing." We know it'll cost too much, or take too much time, or nobody will come, or it won't work. But we say, "Yes," anyway. We say, "Sure." We say, "Let's try it."

A newcomer in the lab suggests we try doing the same experiment adding just one never-before-tried variable. A simple touch. A small thing. We humor the newbie and we run the new experiment against our better judgement.

Our cousin says, "You should call that girl from Wisconsin." She's going back home in a few days. Call her up before she leaves. You know she won't go out with you. She might not even answer the phone. But you call anyway.

This probably won't work.

This idea can't succeed.

The girl will say no.

Jesus, we've fished these waters all night long . . .

And yet.

And yet.

* * *

Do you remember the call of Isaiah? Read about it in chapter six of the book Isaiah.

When Isaiah said yes to God's call, seraphim and cherubim were flying around in the temple. God's robes hung down from the heavens. The sanctuary was filled with religious special effects: smoke, the smell of incense, the sound of chant and angel wing. Isaiah, in this context, said, "Yes, yes, yes. Here am I. Send me."

It was clear as a bell what Isaiah should do.

Not so much for Simon Peter.

Simon Peter's circumstance is no less power-filled. Simon stands face-to-face with God; it's just he doesn't know it yet. Like us, God is near. We just don't see.

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Could it be that Jesus sometimes invites us to do something that doesn't make perfect sense? No flying angels. No holy smoke. Just a seeming off-handed suggestion. *Hey, head out to deep water. Put down your nets.*

Who knows where a "yes" against our better judgement might lead?

The experiment could unlock some new scientific secret.

The church program could be a wild success.

The girl might be dying to say yes, and that first awkward date could turn into a happy 57-year-old and-counting marriage.

And that empty net just might fill with flashing silver fish after a long night of having not caught a single thing.

Jesus asks Simon a simple question. No big deal. "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets." It's an invitation to trust, to test, to try. It's an invitation into a relationship. This question will, of course, lead to other questions. And this day on the water will lead to the journey of a lifetime.

When Jesus invites us to deep water, even when it doesn't seem to make any sense, it behooves us to pay attention. Maybe we should follow Simon Peter's reluctant lead.

When Jesus calls, *say yes*.

Say yes.