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February 7, 2010
Luke 5:1-11

After Jesus was baptized and had returned from being tempted by the devil in the wilderness, he roamed around in Galilee. He preached in his home synagogue in Nazareth. The next sabbath Jesus preached in Capernaum, another city in Galilee. Capernaum is nestled on the Sea of Galilee. It was the place to which fishermen returned with their day's catch. Following the story line in the gospel of Luke, it sounds like Jesus and Peter became acquainted in Capernaum. Perhaps Peter introduced himself to Jesus after Jesus had finished preaching in the synagogue. We learn in Chapter 4 that Jesus dined that sabbath evening at Peter's home. A few weeks after that Peter is present when Jesus draws a sizeable crowd beside the Sea of Galilee. In fact, the crowd presses in so hard and so close that Jesus interrupts himself. He moves to a place where he can be better heard and seen. Yes, he sits in Peter's boat "a little way from the shore" and continues teaching the crowds.

When Jesus finished his teaching, he challenged Peter to put down his fishing nets into deeper water. After expressing doubt that this will make for a bigger catch, Peter obeys Jesus and lets down the nets in deeper water. And we know what happened. Peter and his fisherfolk, amazed and rejoicing, filled up two boats with the fish bounty. Sounds like a good fisherman's tale, doesn't it? Do we believe it? Of course, we do! We want to claim that big catch! It tells us of Jesus' power and of our ministry in His name.

Jesus doesn't just preach in the synagogue sabbath after sabbath. He comes and meets us where we spend most of our time – outside of the walls of the church, pursuing the commitments and joys of our daily lives. Often Jesus meets us when we least expect it. This was certainly true here. Peter and his partners had finished their work, their fishing for the day. Any tried and true fisherman knows that you don't go out at night. The best catch is during the day. Yet here is Jesus commanding them out into deeper water for a jackpot catch.

The first words that Peter says in the gospel of Luke are, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." We discover Peter suspended between the reality of having caught no fish and Jesus' call to a radical obedience, to trying again for the first time in a new way. "Put out into the deep water and let down your net for a catch." "Deep water", says Jesus, a place where we are uncertain of the outcome, where we can't fathom the bottom or be guaranteed of firm footing, where the risk is greater and the return murkier. Why would we want to gamble with this Jesus commandment? We may not totally like our lives as they are, but at least

least familiarity breeds some confidence.

Many of us might agree that in our current economic climate, we are already in deep waters. Frankly, we would like to retreat towards the shore where we can see the bottom. Why risk when we can celebrate the tried and true before us.

David Murdock (no relative of Rupert Murdoch) is an 86 year old billionaire, the CEO of Dole Foods. Having dropped out of high school at the age of 15 because of his severe dyslexia and later being homeless and destitute, eventually he climbed the ladder of success. His guiding motto was, "In order to do the impossible, you must see the invisible." Isn't that like Jesus' invitation to move into deeper waters? We have to believe that in the unknown, there is goodness and bounty. Like Peter, Jesus calls us to be obedient to his command, even when we may question the wisdom of it. As Fred Craddock says the issue for Peter is his life. The issue is our lives. It is not how successful we may be, but in whose name and for what glory are we living.

Later this afternoon we can enjoy the passing glory and excitement of the Super Bowl. This grandiose, all American event brings accolades and glory to whomever today's stars may be. This is all well and good. Perhaps by next month we'll have a hard time remembering the score or even who played.

By entering into deeper waters, Jesus invites us into a world of rich blessings and challenging discipleship that doesn't end today, but continues on and on.. By saying "yes" to Jesus, Peter was awed by the result.. In letting his nets out into deeper water, they were beginning to break from the gigantic catch. Talk about a cup overflowing! It certainly did for Peter and his fisherfolk. Ironically such abundance caused Peter to confess his own sinfulness, his unworthiness. Some of us feel the same way. How can we accept Jesus' invitation to radical blessing and service. We are neither worthy nor qualified. In the eyes of Jesus this does not matter. Jesus knows us in ways that we do not know ourselves. Jesus calls us to ministry in ways that we can not imagine. From our own fears, Jesus calls us into discipleship. Jesus frees us from our own shallowness and leads us into the abundant unknown.

Ten days and counting. Lent will be upon us. What a great time for us to put out into our own deep, to relinquish our fears and renew our callings as Jesus' disciples. What might this Lenten season require of us? Honesty, courage and discipline. When Peter honestly confronted his sinfulness, Jesus replied, "do not be afraid." Jesus beckoned Peter on to a radically new and different life. He made him a fisher of people. Peter was afraid of the unknown but mustered up the courage to leave the life he knew for New life! New possibilities! New callings! Are they worth pursuing?

In this sour economy I have shared random conversations with people laid off from their jobs. While some have found other jobs or second careers, others have devoted time to volunteer work. They tell me how needed they feel; how they are making a difference in

the lives of the ill, the desperate, the discouraged. They feel privileged and blessed to be serving in such a significant way. Some of the unemployed among us are forced into looking at life differently. Here in Luke, none of us are required, we are simply invited.. May we have the courage to follow into the deep where the gifts of abundant life await us. May we encounter Jesus in the depths of our souls. May we embrace and follow him wherever he leads us. May we be grateful for these opportunities! Thanks be to God!