

February 8, 2004  
Epiphany 5

*"Are You Ready to Go Out to Deep Water?"*

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**NIV LUKE 5:11**

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*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, <sup>2</sup> he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

In the summer of 1977 I saw something I had never seen before. It was so amazing that it took my breath away, and brought tears to my eyes. Those of you from the so-called "great generation" never saw this. My dad never saw it. It rates as the #3 most important thing that has ever happened to me in life, after coming to faith in Jesus and after marrying my wife Susan. It was the birth of our first child that I witnessed with my own eyes. To see a child born into the world is to be in the presence of God and experience personally his mighty hand that brings two cells together and creates human life. It defies all logic and reasoning to say that something this spectacular merely developed by chance over millions of years of time.

I think I am safe in saying that what I experienced in a hospital room in Santa Barbara, California on July 28, 1977 at about 8:30 PM is small compared to what Peter experienced that day when he lowered his nets into deep water and suddenly saw them exploding with fish. This was no accident or freak occurrence in nature. This miracle happened because it was Jesus who said to Peter, "Put out into the deep water and let down the nets for a catch." The miracle so overwhelmed Peter that he felt worthless in the presence of Jesus. That is why he said, "Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man!"

How different your life is this coming week compared to the life that Peter lived along the Sea of Galilee! We drive freeways, we watch television, we pop our morning oatmeal into the microwave, we hardly ever see the stars shining at night. Yet, as we begin another week of existence here on this ever-decaying earth, with the hope that this will be the week Jesus comes in his glory, we want to listen to the voice of Jesus and go out to deep water. Are you ready for this? **"Are You Ready to Go Out to Deep Water?"**

## **1) Look at routines that will never be the same**

It doesn't look like much of a net busting week, this week before us, does it? That certainly was true of Peter as he cleaned his nets alongside the Sea of Galilee. Work hard all night. No fish in the net. No fish to sell at the local market to buy food for his family. Yet something was different about this day that made it no routine day. It says, "One day Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God." Routine lives of fishing, going to the market, making pottery, tending cattle and sheep were not the same, because Jesus was there, teaching God's word to the people. In fact the people were so eager to hear Jesus, they crowded around him, and he had to ask Peter if he could use his boat to push off from the shore and sit up higher so the people could see and hear him better. The wind that came across the water would carry the sound of Jesus' voice into the crowd. It says, "There he sat down and taught the people from boat."

The routines of life are important. You could not just hang up the nets to dry without washing them. The dirt and seaweed that dried onto the nets would make them much harder to throw out the next night. The routines of your life are important. Tomorrow is another day of life on this earth for you. You will wake up in the morning, make your breakfast, drink your coffee, drive to work, do your errands. Think of all the different things you will be doing this week. How interesting your life is! Also how stressful this week will be for some of you, especially if things aren't going well for you at your home, your job, or in school.

Whatever the routines of your life may be, they have the potential to be very special when Jesus comes to you and teaches you the Word of God the way he did these people along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. "He sat down and taught the people from the boat." That's what Jesus wants to do for you. He will not be waiting for you at the shores of Lake Lopez or Lake Cachuma to teach you the Word of God. He is waiting for you to open the Bible and begin reading so he can come to you. Even if it is just a little time, as little as three minutes a day, if you open the Bible and read, Jesus will teach you and the routines of life will never be the same. Every day will turn out to be net busting day, a day to rejoice in the miracles of God, especially the miracle of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. As Jesus comes to you with the miracle of his resurrection every day is special. You can say with the psalmist, "This is the day the Lord the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Are you ready to go out into the deep water with Jesus? Are you ready for a net busting week? Now let's look at the opportunities that are staring you in the face when you go out to deep water.

## **2) Look at the opportunities that always abound**

What a glorious opportunity there was for Peter when Jesus told him to go into the deep water. "When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." What did Jesus know about fishing? Yes, he was Lord and God from all eternity, but he was also true Man who had set aside his glory as God. He had to learn how to read and write, and work with wood in his father's carpenter shop. Jesus was not a fisherman. He did not grow up working with his dad throwing out nets, cleaning fish, and selling them in the market. Here is Jesus, the carpenter's son from Nazareth telling Peter the experienced fisherman where to find fish. The way to catch fish

with a net was to find them in the shallows, at night, drag the net through the water and gather in the fish. The nets were not that large. They had to be pulled in by hand. There was no way to capture fish in the deep water. The net would not be able to drag along the bottom and surround the fish. Even if there were large schools of fish in the deep water, there was no way to throw the net around them and bring them in.

Peter does not brush Jesus off, and ignore his words, and miss a golden opportunity in his life. "Simon answered, 'Master we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'" Don't you just love these words of Peter, "But because you say so." This is going to be a special week in your life because you don't want to ignore Jesus words in your life, and fail to see the opportunities he is setting before you when you go into deep water.

Are you ready to go out to deep water? This morning we think of the opportunities that the Lord is placing before us with the privilege of prayer. It was Jesus who gave us the invitation, "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be open to you." How many opportunities have you missed this past week because you did not go out to deep water and take Jesus at his Word. To wake up each day and pray for our family, pray for our church and pray for opportunities to witness to our faith. Go to deep water! Listen to the Apostle Paul as he prays in the book of Romans, "And I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you."

Or lets think of another opportunity you have this coming week to go into deep water and experience miracles that come because of your faith. Jesus said in Matthew 5, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." In John 15 he says, "I am the vine and you are the branches." Connected to Jesus, miraculously connected to him even though we were once dead in sin, we are empowered to live a new Christian life and bear fruit for him. When the USA Olympic hockey team, a group of amateur hockey players, beat the professional Soviet team, the announcer shouted, "Do you believe in miracles?" As you face another week of life on this earth, do you believe in miracles? Do you see the opportunities to walk in places you have never walked before and tread on holy ground that you have never stepped on before? Galatians says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control." Are you ready for these miracles to be produced in your life? Are you ready for a net busting week? Are you ready for Jesus to be with you every step of your walk for him? Are you ready for him to open your eyes to see opportunities to witness to him as the only hope of escape from the flaming fires of eternal death and punishment? Peter picked up the oars, and together with the others, he started rowing out to deep water, rowing and rowing with faith in the words of Jesus with every pull on the oars.

### **3) Look at the miracles that always astound**

Now they let down the nets. "When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink." James, John, bring another boat, bring it quickly the net is full of fish." In 1986 during a drought year when the Sea of Galilee was very low, they discovered a fishing boat from this time in history buried in the lake silt. It was about 26 feet long, 7 feet wide and 4 feet high. That's a good size boat. If that was the size of the boat in which they were

fishing, think of how many fish were in those nets. Even a large fishing boat from Morro Bay would not have that many fish in a net that stretches for hundreds of yards. Peter spent many hours pulling in nets, and sometimes they were empty. Nothing in his realm of experience ever came close to what happened when Jesus said, "Go out to deep water." Face to face with God's glory, he felt the burden and shame of his sin. He said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" And then he came in touch with a greater miracle. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men." The mighty Lord and God who was standing in front of people had the power to take away fear by forgiving sin, and power to enable humble fishermen like Peter to bring people into the kingdom of God. One sermon preached on Pentecost and 3000 people were caught for the kingdom of God.

Are you ready to go out to deep water? There is no place you can find hope for your problem of sin except in the place where Jesus tells you to go. With Peter, Abraham, David, and saints of the past we confess the truth about ourselves, "I am sinful person." "I am ashes and dust." "

My sin is always before me." Then Jesus tells us to go out to deep water. In the miracle that took place on the cross, our sin was transferred onto Jesus and paid for completely. In his resurrection from the dead, we have the assurance that the Father accepted the sacrifice Jesus made. In the miracle of our baptism we are buried with Christ and raised to new life. In Jesus we even find the strength to do something we could never do by ourselves, catch people and bring them into the kingdom of God. Are you ready to go out to deep water? Let me ask that again and hear you respond personal with two words...I am. Amen.