



she loves

Devotional
October 9, 2009

Thanksgiving according to Simon Peter

Luke 5: 1-11

While working through my homework for our Beth Moore, “Jesus, the One and Only” study this week, I became fascinated with the interplay between Simon Peter and Jesus – the first time that Jesus takes Simon fishing. I have read the story in Luke 5:1-11 a thousand times ...but as I meditated on a few facts surrounding the narrative, though, it came alive in a new way and gave me a different perspective on Simon’s response and on my life, and somehow it all became related to Thanksgiving.

There were a few things about the story which caught my attention for the first time this week. Assuming that these events are written in chronological order, it appears that Simon and Jesus have met a few times before this encounter. In John 1:35-43 we learn that Simon’s brother, Andrew spent the day with Jesus and then sought out Simon to introduce him to Jesus stating, *“We have found the Messiah”*. Later in Luke 4:38, we read that *“Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her.”* That same night, while at Simon’s home, Jesus healed many people and cast out demons.

An unidentified space of time passed, and then Jesus took the trip on Simon’s boat which would change Simon’s life forever. What was different about that day?

Simon’s brother had professed a conviction that Jesus was the Christ, Simon himself had seen Jesus heal his mother-in-law and many other people. He had seen Jesus’ power over demons, but for a time, Simon’s life remained normal and untouched: he stuck to his job, he worked to provide for his family, he spent the nights at sea searching for the catch which would bring them food and financial security. Then one day, after catching nothing all night, Jesus asked him to *“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch ...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”* (Luke 5:4-7).

I assume Simon would have dreamt of this day. He had just hit the jackpot. He had won the lottery. He would now have more than enough to feed his family and to provide for them. All his material needs were taken care of but, somehow, his financial well being was now meaningless. Instead of thanking God for His provision, and running to the market to cash in the bumper crop he *“fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”* (Luke 5:8). When he got to shore he left everything, including the boatload of fish (!) and followed Jesus. He had somehow encountered Jesus in a way that made everything else so much less important.

I thought about the boatload of fish left on the beach, and wondered what happened to the miracle catch. Did the fish rot, or did crowds come and unload the boat to feed their families? Then I tried to place myself and our family situation into the story to understand it better.

I pictured my husband locking up his office door after a long day of meeting with clients and hosting Open Houses. He worked hard all day, but has no indication that any of the work he had done will be fruitful and result in a sale. As he’s walking out to the parking lot, Jesus meets him there, and suggests that he go back, even though it’s now late at night. Reluctantly, but obediently, Bob turns back to the office with Jesus. He unlocks the door, turns on the lights, and they settle into nearby chairs. Almost immediately the phone and fax lines begin to ring. By the end of the evening, he has received offers on his entire inventory of homes for sale. Wow that sounds far- fetched! But it’s essentially what Simon Peter experienced.

Put yourself, your family, your job into the story and imagine it playing out. What would you say? What would you do?

I think I can glimpse now why Simon fell at Jesus' feet, completely in awe. Realizing that he was completely at the limits of his own abilities to provide for his family, would it not be particularly stunning to him that Jesus was so entirely capable and able? Doesn't it make sense that Simon Peter would feel completely unworthy of Jesus' attention? Would the fact that Jesus created bounty from nothing convince him, as nothing else could, that Jesus' power was unfathomable, and that a personal invitation to know this person, this Jesus, was worth leaving everything else behind?

As he leaves the office, finally, late at night, would Bob phone me to say, "Honey we hit the jackpot. All our needs are taken care of", or would he be saying, "Kristal, I have had a new encounter with the ONE who is worth following." How would our lives change? How would this new perspective affect our family, our jobs, and our neighborhood?

We have all encountered Jesus. Like Simon, we may have been introduced to him by a friend or a family member who was convinced of Jesus' identity. We may have seen him work in the lives of people near to us. We may have witnessed miracles done in Jesus' name, and heard people testify to his healing presence in their lives. Until we give Him permission to fully stride into our everyday lives; to meet us at the deepest points where we are afraid, where we are striving in our own power, where we despair and lose hope, where we try so hard to make it on our own, though, I don't think we'll be fully changed, and completely grasp all that He is able and willing to do with our lives.

Jesus, I invite you to meet me at all the places where I am the least in control, the most needy and the most vulnerable. You know where those places are... the places where I doubt myself, where I rehearse my failures, where I question your guidance, and your goodness, and my own decisions, and especially the places where my stomach is sometimes clenched with anxiety. Change my perspective Lord. I pray that the things I have worried about will lose their control over imagination, and that I will be overcome with praise and gratitude and THANKSGIVING that I have the incredible privilege of knowing and following YOU.

Blessings on behalf of the Northview Women's Commission,

Kristal Toews