

**Sermon: Into the Deep**  
**Scripture: Luke 5:1-11**  
**Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans**  
**Date: February 7, 2010**

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Into the deep. This is where Jesus tells Peter to take his boat and let down his nets. In the deep. Peter and his fellow fishermen have been working all night long and have not caught a single fish. They are tired and cleaning their nets to put things away for the day, more than a little disappointed at the futility of their night's work. And Peter does protest a bit, the thought of going back out there into the deep at the end of their long workday. But old faithful Peter says with a sigh... "I'll do it if you say so."

There is a weariness that can befall us in all of our striving to make something of our lives, to make meaning for ourselves in this life, to make a relationship work, to remain true to what we know is right, to be willing to open our hearts again in love to another though the last time ended with disappointment. Setting back out into the deep is to put ourselves at risk one more time, to stir up the courage and strength to act on that delicate unseen ember of hope which glows faintly in our souls. To press forward though you don't know if anything will come of it. If the guarantee was that there would be results from that setting out then it wouldn't be so difficult. But there are not necessarily outward measurable fruits and benefits that result from the sometimes tough work of the soul.

In our modern world we often bow our knees in awe before the processes of the Almighty Market. We are usually working hard to discern and measure what the market wants of us, whether our investment will yield some return and how great a risk we are willing to take and will our actions be looked upon favorably by this great invisible hand and yield us fruits and benefits or will we lose because of the risk we take. And this is the process for at least those of us devotees who have enough resources to enter into the relationship with this great power of the Market. And the others, who don't have enough to play the game, we trust also that this almighty hand will take care of them in the end as well as long as we give the market the respect its due, it'll all work out – usually spoken by those who are the beneficiaries of the way the mysterious system works.

But our religion, you see, suggests that there is a greater power before whom we must bow and to whom our ultimate devotion and allegiance lies. We say, at least in word, that our wealth of living, our value and worth, our security, our futures have nothing ultimately to do with something as small and fickle and impersonal as the market, but rather it has to do with this *higher* power of love that we call the One God. And it's in God's invisible almighty hand, the hand that set the processes of creation into becoming and that holds the world in being and purpose and love, that our investments must lie. We say *that* when we sing and pray and worship and we say we believe it, but do we live it? Do we allow the things of love, the matters of the soul to dictate what we do and don't do, where we go and don't go, even what we buy and don't buy? Or is that mostly dictated by the market? Is it for the common good held in the heart of God that we live or really is it for something else; i.e. our own security and comfort and wealth? There are those who would say it can be a both and. And I would say that on the material level, I don't believe that is true. I think our pursuit of life, liberty and happiness for ourselves individually has not necessarily resulted in the greatest common good. On a spiritual level, though, I could believe that it's both-and. On a spiritual level I think it might very well be the case that the good of each of us individually does in fact lead to the common good as well, in that if we are each in pursuit above all else of the good things for our individual souls, namely love and unity, awakening and wholeness, that then those necessarily translate into good things for the collective. Consumer culture's definition of those "good things" we must pursue though, I'm coming to believe, leads to a break down of the collective good – environmental degradation being only one pronounced case in point.

So what does this have to do with Peter deciding that it couldn't hurt to invest the last dregs of his time and energy and return to the deep part of the lake and cast out his nets one more time? Well, I think it's striking to note that Peter's risk, his courage to invest more time and energy in one more excursion out into the deep led to a HUGE return in investment. He and the others caught more fish than they ever had before, enough to feed villages, enough to make him a handsome amount of money, to ensure the success of his family business. But what is remarkable and even outlandish is what Peter did next as a result of his success. The fish, the money, the business, respect in his

hometown, was not apparently the bottom line for this odd fisherman. What he caught a glimpse of out there – by being willing to go once more out into the deep - was something so much more immense than himself and all his preoccupations and desires which he threw aside with the proclamation “I am unworthy before this great holiness. My sense of what has been important, my sense of what I wanted and what others wanted from me, my sense of purpose is really nothing in the face of God’s presence and power!” He heard the deeper calling of God to some deeper place of purpose and meaning within the soul of the world, beyond money-making and comfort-seeking, beneath all the little calls of purpose to the town’s economy and his own prosperity and security. And he left those boats chocked full of a huge return on his investment, to see what might happen if he invested his very life in the good work of gathering – not fish into his nets – but people into the beloved community of God. It was into the deep that he was willing to go, made himself vulnerable once more and there he found God.