

March 5, 20-17    “The Peter Process”    Luke 5:1-11

Simon Peter was a fisherman. Worked hard. Was never going to be rich. But he was good enough at that job that he was making a living, caring for his family,...and then Jesus literally walked into his life. Jesus, has been ministering in Galilee, the region around the Sea of Galilee, for a whole year. He had a base of operations in Nazareth. He left Nazareth because people in his home town, from his home town synagogue, tried to kill HIM. Jesus walked the miles to Capernaum, and took up residence there. In fact HE probably crashed at Peter's mother in law's house.

It is clear from Luke's account that people throughout Galilee have heard of Jesus. He teaches with authority, that is, He impresses people who care about faith and God, as ONE who is singularly knowledgeable, about God, about the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And HE obviously loves people. HE cares. And if the stories are to be taken seriously, Jesus has power...the power of God. He heals people by praying for them and....touching them. People who are demonized....Jesus commands these evil spirits and they leave. The demonized become normal people. Healthy. Productive. Those are some of the things Peter would have heard, as he and his friends, his fellow fishermen, and his customers who bought fish talked.

Then Jesus arrived in Capernaum where Peter lived. Somehow in one of those details of daily life that seem unimportant at the time, Peter met Jesus. They became friends. Peter finds out that Jesus is speaking on Sabbath, at Saturday's service in the local synagogue, the building where Jews gather to worship and learn the teaching of the Scriptures. We are not told that Peter was a regular. But he was there when Jesus did the sermon. We had a saying in my

home city of Port Arthur. If someone was good at what they did you said, “he knows his onions.” Peter like others thought Jesus was special, good, when HE spoke, Jesus had “authority.” And then the dumbest thing happened. A guy who was reputed to be possessed, interrupted the service shouting that Jesus was from Nazareth and had come to destroy evil spirits, and that Jesus is the “Holy One of God,” the messiah, the Christ. And Jesus commands the “spirit” to come out of the man, the guy is thrown to the ground, but not harmed and then he appears to be normal.

Peter had not counted on that. It was an obvious display of the power of God in Jesus. And here is where things really start to heat up. When Peter left home that morning, his mother-in-law was sick. She had a fever. Did Peter invite Jesus home for lunch? Or did he say, “You should meet my mother-in-law! We have a spare bed you know.” However it unfolded, Jesus went to Peter's home and he found the family distressed over this serious illness where it looks like Peter's mother-in-law is not going to make it. Jesus bent over her, rebuked the fever, probably said something strange like. “No. Out!” and just like that she came out of it, her skin was cool, and she gets off the couch and starts making lunch for the crowd that has gathered in her home!

It is interesting. Luke tells us nothing of Peter's reaction. But Peter is there. He saw what he saw. He heard what he heard Jesus say. One moment the old lady was dying and the next she is making dinner. And then as the sun was setting, the end of Sabbath, the edge of Sunday, someone remarked that a crowd had gathered outside. People have come and they have brought their sick loved ones. Jesus Galilee reputation is well known. And Jesus acts like this is an every day experience, because for HIM it is. He goes

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outside and he starts dealing with the sick. One by one HE heals them. Praying. Laying HIS hands on them. And some of these folks are demonized. It is like Sabbath service all over again. They shout and they revile Jesus, and they identify HIM as “the Son of God.” Jesus casts out demons. Chaos becomes order. People become whole, as once they were.

And one day Jesus is teaching on the beaches of the Sea of Galilee. It is crowded. A big crowd has gathered in part because they have heard about what went on at Pete's mother-in-law's house. So Jesus steps into Peter's boat. And HE says, Peter, I need a little room here. So Peter walks the boat out a little, so Jesus can address the crowd. And when Jesus is done HE turns to Peter and says, “Peter, lets go out into the deep water and go fishing.” Peter is tired. He pulled an all nighter last night and they did not catch a single fish. So tells all of this to Jesus, the message being, “Master, it really is a waste of time.” But he can tell by the expression on Jesus face, Jesus really wants to do this. “But if that is really what you want to do (I'm tired)... sure...we will let down the nets...again.” And he looks at his partners and rolls his eyes...what he means is....Jesus can teach...and heal...but HE's not a fisherman.

And you know what happened. The nets are heavy with the catch. I mean these are fish!! Big ones. They need help so they signal the second boat. They fill both boats with the catch. The boats can barely contain the catch. And it freaks Peter out. He is on miracle overload here! Peter turns to Jesus and he kneels on the catch because there is no where else to kneel and he says, “Go away from me. I am a sinful man.” He is emotional and he's embarrassed, and as his eyes meet the eyes of Jesus, Peter feels like Jesus knows everything he has ever done that is sinful.

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Jesus said two things to Peter before they endeavoured to make it to shore with this mega catch of fish. “Don't be afraid Peter.” He said that because Peter was afraid. He was afraid of God. He was afraid of what was happening to himself. He knew enough to know none of this is under his control. He has not been religious. And here he is feeling surrounded by God and the holy angels. He knows the fish are a miracle. And that scares him all the more.

And then Jesus says the second thing. “From now on you will fish for men.” It left Peter speechless. He would remember little of the getting the boats back to shore. They got there and it was a remarkably easy passage. He and his partners pulled the boats up on shore. They left it all right there on the beach. And they followed Jesus. For close to 2 years. All the way to Calvary and on that Friday, and to the resurrection on that Sunday morning. For the rest of their days. Peter and his partners followed Jesus. The Peter process was a matter of hearing about Jesus. Then seeing Jesus. And hearing HIM, and seeing the signs, and the wonders which disclose that Peter is in the presence of the Living God.

It is the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the season of Lent, the season in which followers of Jesus turn their attention to the cross and the open tomb. To what God has done in and through Jesus to save us from our sinfulness. The power of this season is not the power of religion, which is so often a system or an institution. The power of this season is Jesus. HIS words. HIS deeds. HIS love which claims us, and makes us want to follow....wherever HE leads.

Let us pray;

O Lord we recognize that as you called Peter even so you have called us. Help us to recognize this truth as we journey through

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this season of remembrance and devotion. Lead us as you led Peter. Show us your way and reveal to us your truth. Cause our faith to grow that we might be servants of your people and our neighbours and that you might receive the glory and the praise. Amen