

Row, row, row your boat, / gently
down the stream / merrily, merrily, merrily,
merrily, / Life is but a dream. If your life
has been a dream, I apologize, but this
sermon isn't for you. This sermon is for
those of us whose lives have been far from a
dream, perhaps nightmarish at times, and
certainly not always merry.

Simon (Peter) arrived at this place in
his life as well. He, along with the other
fisherman, were exhausted, frustrated, and
disappointed. They were not very merry.
They came face to face with their limits and
gave up. They abandoned their boats and
washed their nets, as if to wash their hands
of the whole miserable, unsuccessful,
experience. They were tired and just "done"
with it all. Anybody been here?

Then, Jesus boards one of the boats,
Simon's, and asks him to push out into deep
water. Jesus didn't show up when
everything was going great, after a good
night's sleep, and a full belly from eating all
the fish they caught. Jesus came at the end
of a bad day, yet asks them to keep on
working.

When Simon feels he is at the end of
his rope, Jesus invites him to go deeper.
Jesus calls him to go deeper. This is Peter's
call story. The call of the first disciple, the
call that will change Peter's life forever.
The call that made it possible for all of us to
receive the good news. Peter was an
ordinary fisherman. Jesus transforms
ordinary folks into instruments for God's
use, and it begins by inviting them to go
deeper.

Going deeper, away from the
surface, away from surface-level living, is
scary. We don't know what's in deep water.
We can't see the bottom or all the sharks

circling us, waiting to devour us. It can feel
lonely out there – when everyone else stays
close to the shore, close to safety. What if a
storm comes up? What if my boat sinks?
What if I drown out there?

Yes, there's a risk in going deeper
with Christ, but there's a risk in everything.
We see in this scripture, that both boats
begin to sink – but for good reasons. Even
with Jesus in Simon's boat, the boat begins
to sink because of the surprising and
sometimes overwhelming blessings that
come from following Christ. The good
problems to have, yet the good problems can
make us feel like we're drowning too.

Simon calls the other boat to join
him in the deep, to help him, and that boat is
so full it begins to sink too. Just because
Jesus is in our boat, that doesn't mean that
our boat isn't going to sink. It means that
Jesus will be with us when it does. And, we
have other followers, our brothers and
sisters in Christ, who join us and come to
our aid as well. We all can drown in
Christ's gracious love together.

Deep water is dangerous and scary,
but it's where the fish are. It's where
Christ's miraculous grace is. The fisherman
were professionals who knew how to fish,
but they tried all night on their own, in their
own strength, and accomplished no results.
Yet, when they pushed out into the deep and
fished with Jesus, surprising results
happened.

Simon realized this was a miracle.
He was so awed by how Jesus worked in his
life, how Jesus called him and helped him,
that he dropped everything to follow him.
He said "yes" to his call because he
experienced Christ's gracious love in the
deep water.

His friends, his fishing partners in the other boat, also followed Christ. Jesus may not have been in their boat, but they experienced Christ through Simon who took the risk and went deeper. We may not always hear Christ's call directly. God uses other people to speak through or to bring us near him. When I felt that God was calling me into ministry as a vocation, I wrestled with what exactly God was calling me to do. It wasn't until my pastor said to me, "Kristie, you'd be a great pastor." I was like, "Huh?" It all makes sense now, but at the time, I couldn't wrap my head around that because I never had a female pastor. I just couldn't see myself in that role. God uses other people to call to us, to invite us into the deep.

When Simon and the fisherman became followers of Christ, they left everything after they had gone deeper. They left their boats, their nets, the tools needed for their profession. They left their old way of doing things to go out into new territory with Christ. They even left all the fish, the good things that come from following Christ. They let it all go, when they said yes. Nothing else mattered.

There were two boats. Jesus enters one, but both boats go out into the deep water of God's grace. One boat experiences Christ directly, and the other boat experiences Christ later through a friend. It doesn't matter when or how we become Christ followers. It just matters that we do. I invite you this morning: push out into the deep. Come into the deep water of Christ's love. Cast your nets into the miraculous waters of God's grace. Say "yes" when Christ calls.

Please join me in a *Response to the Word*.

Leader: When all seems pointless, and it's easy to give up:

People: We will drop our nets into the deep.

Leader: When the harvest is scarce and the needs are great:

People: We will drop our nets into the deep.

Leader: When Christ calls for disciples and speaks to our hearts:

People: We will drop out nets into the deep.

Amen.