

Filled to breaking (Luke 5:1-11)

As if fishing for people sounds any easier.

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When Jesus tells Simon Peter to put down the fishing nets in the deep water, Peter is doubtful that they will catch anything.

But as the fishermen haul nets full of fish into their boats, Peter falls down at Jesus' knees and repents of his unbelief: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

Jesus does not turn away from him, though, and neither does he focus on Peter's unbelief. Instead, Jesus simply tells him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

As if that sounds any easier! As if catching people is a comforting call! This is probably why Jesus leads with "Do not be afraid," for he knows that the first reaction to the call to catch people would surely be one of fear.

Our reaction is likely the same, even if softened a bit by years of reading this passage and singing the songs about being fishers of people. It almost doesn't faze us anymore to imagine the scene of an abundant catch in what was assumed to be a deserted lake. It almost doesn't faze us anymore that those nets were breaking and those boats were sinking.

But Peter's reaction reminds us that maybe it should.

This huge catch of fish is nothing short of a miracle. It defies all that Peter and the fishermen expect, based on what they have seen all night long. And what have they

seen? Nothing. No fish. Just empty nets. Now they see so many fish, nets filled to breaking.

So Peter's reaction, in the midst of his shock, is repentance. He repents of his unbelief. He repents of his limited perspective; based on what he had seen so far, he did not believe Jesus could do anything differently. But Jesus does, and Jesus asserts that there is even more where this came from.

We, like Peter, might not believe that this can be true, based on what we have seen so far. Every day brings news of more of the same in our world—more intolerance, division, violence, and death. We, too, have been living in the “all night long,” where often we can only see emptiness and despair.

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Jesus calls us to look beyond what we see and what we think to be true; Jesus calls us to go deeper, to toss the nets of our faith wider and farther. And he will fill our nets to breaking with people we otherwise might not have ever seen, liked, or loved. As our nets fill to breaking, so do our hearts break open to those sisters and brothers brought to us in the love of Christ. Jesus fills our nets—and us—with abundance and hope.