

Luke 5:1-11 Jesus, Simon Peter, and the miraculous catch of fish.

It is interesting to imagine what Simon was feeling during the events that the writer of the Gospel of Luke recall in this passage. Simon was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee (also known as Lake Gennesaret. Indeed, it was a fresh water lake).

Fishing was a night-time activity. This is when the fish would come up closer to the surface for warmer water. It was also a more effective time to use the nets, which the fish could not see and avoid under the cover of night. Fishing was often a cooperative event as nets were dragged in between boats. Fish that we caught included tilapia, catfish (though unclean to the Jews, could be sold in Gentile markets), and carp.

Simon and his fishing partners, John and James (Andrew, Simon's brother is inexplicably not mentioned here in Luke) are done for the night, and their boats lie empty. This is when Jesus asks them to row him out, away from the shore, so he can teach to the crowds better. As Luke tells the story, Simon already knows this man. He had been healing and casting out demons in the city for a little while. He had come to Simon's own house and healed his mother-in-law.

Now Jesus sat in his boat cleaning his nets (daily chore that needed to be done when fishing was over), and watched Jesus teach. Don't you wish you know what Jesus was saying? Here though, Simon literally had the best seat in the house. After the teaching was over, Jesus made a strange request of Simon.

What might Simon have been feeling when Jesus asked him to throw his nets back into the lake? Frustration: this meant he would need to clean his nets again. Confusion: everyone knows that you can't catch fish during the day. Skepticism: What does this



Left: A large pile of Galilean tilapia, aka St. Peter Fish, which has been fished in the Sea of Galilee for centuries. Right: a boat that was excavated from the bed of the Sea of Galilee in 1986. This boat dates back to the time of Jesus and now is on display in a museum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

wandering healer know about fishing? Exhaustion: I just want to go home at the end of a long night.

Now imagine what he must have been feeling as he pulled the net up. Confusion: What did we catch? It feels not just heavier than I expected, but heavier than possible. Excitement: Think of how much money these fish are going to sell for in the market! Fear: Is the boat going down? And finally realization: Who is this man in my boat?!

When Jesus tells him he will be "fishing for people," there is an element of judgment in this pronouncement. In the Hebrew Bible, every allusion to God's fishing is about catching the unjust, rich, and powerful who exploit others. Fishing was the activity of turning the world upside down.

At the same time, Luke uses a word similar to entrap, capture, or even "captivate." Simon and his friends are told they will "captivate people." For the sake of the good news.

They will captivate people for Jesus, for the Kingdom of God, for this world-transforming mission. Finally, what does Simon feel when he leaves it all behind? It is good to imagine and remember all of these emotions, because they are all a part of following Christ still today.