

Peter's mother in law was sick. Very sick, actually, burning up with fever.

The kind that casts the sufferer into that shivering burning middle distance

where they can't be reached, that makes loved ones afraid, that makes

them think—maybe she's not going to get better. It was that fear that drove

Peter to go find Jesus—a man he had never met—but who was reputed to

be able to work wonders and who was in their own fishing town of

Capernaum that very day.

Jesus was in the synagogue teaching, and Peter asked Jesus if he could come

and make this woman well again. Jesus agreed, walked to Peter's house,

stood over Peter's Mother in law, and with just words—words—she was

well again. She popped up from her sick bed and she launched straight

into—I hadn't been expecting guests, sorry for the state of the house, let me

make you something to eat, no no, I insist. The sickness was gone and it was

as if even the body's memory of pain was gone too. This took place about sunset, and everyone who saw it happen ran out of Peter's house and found their own friends and family and loved ones who were sick and brought them to Jesus too. All night long, Peter watched Jesus cure every single person who was brought before him, every single sick Capernaum, no matter what it was that had haunted them, walked out of Peter's home well again. So that the house was filled with shouts of joy from sunset to sunrise.

So what did Peter do in the morning? Did he fall to his knees, confess his sins, pledge his life to Jesus, leave it all behind? No. In the morning, Peter went back to work. Jesus went this way, and Peter went that way. Jesus left town and taught in other cities, other towns throughout Galilee, and Peter went back to fishing.

It was only by happenstance that Peter encountered Jesus again. Jesus was teaching on the shore of a lake, Lake Genessaret, sometimes called the Sea of Galilee. The shoreline was a busy place filled with commerce, and the crowd that was gathered to hear Jesus was huge, pressing in around him on all sides, jostling and grumbling, everyone trying to see and hear in that way when no one then is able to see or hear. It got to the point that Jesus looked around for some way of getting a bit of distance from the crowd, and he saw a small fishing boat happened to be nearby. And in the boat— Peter—hard at work at one of the day-to-day tasks of being a fisherman. And Jesus asked him to take him out onto the water just a little ways out, so that this crowd could actually hear him. The man very well might have saved his mother in law's life—so if he wanted to go on the water, out on the water they would go. And Jesus taught, and the crowd listened, and

Peter minded the oars, keeping the boat from drifting too far out or bottoming out on the sand.

At the end of it all, after Jesus had finished what he had to say and the crowd had taken their fill of words, Jesus turned to Peter and had something to say to him. Perhaps it was by way of thanking Peter for his help, or out of concern that this man not go home with nothing to show for a day of work, or perhaps for reasons of his own, Jesus says to Peter: let us set out into the deep water, cast your nets there. Fishing had not been good, but Peter was not about to tell this man no, so he did it. He cast his nets into the sea, and he hauled on the nets and found them teeming with an uncountable mass of fish. Fins and scales and gills smelling of the sea and more even than the boat could hold. But Peter fell to his knees and clutched at Jesus feet, and

the next steps Peter would take would be to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. His life from that day on, dedicated to God.

All that, over fish. It was a remarkable, catch, true. But it was nothing other than a net filled with fish, something Peter had seen a hundred hundred times. Peter had watched Jesus cure the sick with just a word, but then Peter went back to his ordinary life. Peter had seen Jesus cure every single sick person in the city of Capernaum in just one night—but it's fish that makes him drop to his knees, confess his sins, pledge his life, leave it all behind, follow Jesus. All over fish?

But I get it. I do. I understand why it meant so much. Jesus cured the sick and Peter saw a holy man, a person full of the power of heaven—amazing, true—but it had nothing to do with Peter, it didn't require Peter to do anything. This man Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, and Peter was not,

and so he went back to his ordinary life having seen someone else do extraordinary things—awestruck but not transformed. It is one thing to watch Jesus do something incredible. It's quite another for Jesus to say to Peter—you, come here and help me. I need your boat, your nets, your oars, your arms, your life, I have holy work to do, and you are going to help me. Let us set out into the deep water, cast your nets there. I get it, I do. The great work of heaven touches Peter's ordinary life, sweeps up and implicates the ordinary things of Peter's world. Fish. Fish. Of course he is transformed. How could he stay the same?

It is easy to imagine that God reaching into someone's life would be dramatic—wondrous—miraculous—angel visions totally divorced from the rest of the way life works. But that's not what God is like most of the time, and miracles are over-rated anyway. Peter watched miracle healings for

eight hours straight, it took fish to make him a disciple, because fishing is what Peter knew, fishing is what Peter could give. God does not call people to be someone they're not. God doesn't call people to have lived a different life than they have.

If you are waiting for God's call upon your life, if you are wondering when you will hear it, how it shall come, what it will be like. Learn this from the apostle Peter, God will call you in the midst of the ordinary stuff of life. The Holy work of what is normal, the daily bread of existence. It will look like something you've seen before, a net full of fish, a person with their hand out on the street, a law crying out to be changed, a child crying out for comfort, a world crying out for justice.

The spirit of God, still living, still moving in the world, God reaches into the ordinary stuff of life, the ordinary places of our world and says: you, you are going to help me. I need your desk job, your commute, your parenting, I need your mind, your teaching, your sobriety, I need your med school training, your accounting certificate, your Saturday morning walk in the woods, I need your heartache, your divorce, your diagnosis, I need your coming out story, your love, your anger, I need your prayers full of caring, I need your hands full of healing, I need your life full of living, I need your death full of loving, there is holy work to do, and you are going to help me, let us set out into the deep water, cast your nets there.