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Like many Alaskans, I count it as a good day when we begin with a story about fishing. For the most part, I'd rather fish than, say, tend sheep.

And so I'm glad to hear about Jesus, Peter, James, and John out fishing.

This story, like the one from the prophet Isaiah, falls neatly into the genre of "call narrative." God's people in Israel, and those who encounter Jesus, experience the breakthrough of another realm....and in that encounter, they are called to respond....to make this way of Astonishing Light and Life and Love the Way of their life.

Too often, we have reduced this to "call to ministry," and by ministry, we tend to think professional ministry. So the stories are heard as something that Michael and I resonate with, but that have little to do with other Christians.

You know that's not right.....these are calls to all who encounter the Mystery beyond ourselves....

There are other problems with the way that the story has been told, of course.

Most problematic, for most of us, is this "leaving everything" business.

I've heard and read call stories, over and over,
as terrifying stories.

Terrifying because of what may be demanded of us.

Let's look at what Jesus really asked of Peter, James, and John.

He asked them to put their boats out a little way from shore....and then Jesus taught the crowds.

Following that, Jesus asked them to go a bit farther out, into deeper water....and then, famously, to put their nets down for fish.

I want us to notice a few details of the story:

- **Peter's response:**

- *"Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing.*

Jesus, we are TIRED. Not just a little tired, but bone tired. And it's not just me. All of us. We are TIRED.

We know this kind of tired. We are WORKING; we are DOING OUR PART....and nothing seems to be working. The most common answer to "How are you?" used to be "fine," or "busy," but these days, 9 out of 10 answer "tired."

Jesus doesn't seem to offer any Pollyanna answer, but I love that Peter said it. He was seen and heard....as are we.

- *Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."*

Yet....and here, Peter makes a bold move of incredible trust. "Master, if you say so, I will." Peter doesn't answer for anyone except himself...but something about Jesus' presence brought Trust to the surface, and Peter said YES.

- The story moves from **scarcity to abundance**.
 - from no fish to more than Peter could handle.
- This abundance is not ONLY an abundance of fish...it also **creates community**.
 - Peter is confronted with more fish than he can handle, and guess what! Instead of sinking, he calls to his friends and co-workers, and as a community, they manage.
- The call that Jesus makes calls Peter, James, and John to **something that is already within them**.

I've heard the story so long, and mostly heard "they left everything...." and I've stumbled over "fishers of people" and I have missed that Jesus calls Peter, James, and John to *fishing*. Not shepherding, or housekeeping, or accounting.....to fishing.

I've been listening to videos that we will see together in March....stories of our shared lives at St. Mary's. A line that keeps coming back to me, said by one of our own, is something like,

"Being and becoming our authentic selves is our ministry."

This does NOT, of course, mean that there is nothing to leave behind.

And it does NOT mean that following the Way of Jesus can be reduced to navel-gazing and Finding Our True Self.

The Rest of the Story, we know, includes the content of following Jesus...healing, and forgiving, and living love in unimaginable ways. AND THEY RESTED. Even Jesus rested along the way.

Bishop MacDonald would say,

"we are called to someone worth dying for, perhaps...

but more important, to someone and something worth LIVING for."

The call to respond to the Holy One of Liberating, Life-Giving Love

is a call to ourselves,

to community,

and to abundance.

It's a call that comes to each of us, day after day....and hour by hour....to follow.

We are not alone. There is enough, and enough to share.

And even when we are tired, it is a call worthy of living for.