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## **The Call of Simon Peter**

**based on Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20 & Luke 5:1-11**

**by Ralph Milton**

Simon was bushed. Dog tired. His shoulders hurt from rowing, his legs hurt from standing, and his throat was raw. He was catching a cold.

That was the good news. The bad news was that Simon hadn't caught even a minnow all night. "The place is clean fished out," he complained to nobody in particular. Simon often talked to himself. "Too darn many people fishing around here."

Nothing to do now but to clean the net. Get the weeds and the twigs and the junk out of it. "Thankless job!" Simon muttered. "Tomorrow I'll just catch more of this junk."

Head down into his net and into his dejection, Simon didn't see Jesus coming up the beach. But he heard the crowd of people with him and looked up. Simon knew Jesus. The Galilee wasn't such a big place that you wouldn't know him. Especially a strange one like this Jesus.

Not that Simon was glad to see him. Simon didn't have much use for preachers. "I'll do my fishin' – they can do their preachin'. Just leave me be, that's all."

Simon was glad he hadn't said that part out loud. "No sense offending folk," he thought. Simon would do almost anything to avoid an argument.

"Simon," called Jesus. "May I use your boat?"

"I suppose," said Simon a little surprised. "Why?"

"If you stop it near the shore, I can sit in your boat and talk to the people."

"You mean you want me to row it out, and sit there while you preach at them people?"

"Do you mind?" Jesus smiled at him.

"Course I mind," thought Simon. He didn't say that of course. Simon didn't say anything. He just got into his boat and waited for Jesus to climb aboard. Then two or three strokes of the oars was all it took to get Jesus just enough away from the crowd so he could talk to them.

"Well, I'll row him out here, but I don't have to listen to his preaching," Simon thought. But gradually Simon began to listen. And Simon found himself thinking

thoughts that had never occurred to him before. When Jesus finished speaking, Simon found himself wishing he would go on.

"Is that all?" asked Simon. "I was just startin' to get the hang of it."

"Well, I'm tired and they're tired," said Jesus. "Thanks for helping. How'd you make out with the fishing."

That brought Simon back to reality with a thump. "Not a thing," grumped Simon. "Not a fu..." He caught himself. "Not a thing. The place is fished out."

"I think I can find you some fish," said Jesus.

"Oh sure," thought Simon. "Now this carpenter turned preacher thinks he knows something about fishing." But of course, Simon didn't say that.

"Get back into your boat and go where the water is deep," said Jesus. "Then try again."

Simon couldn't think of any way to get out of it. So he rowed out to the deeper water, glancing over to the shore occasionally in the hope that Jesus would have wandered off. No such luck. "I'll go through the motions to satisfy this busy-body." This was out loud, but far enough away so Jesus couldn't hear.

"Holy mackerel!" yelled Simon when he started to pull in the net. It was so full, he could hardly pull it in. Heaving and hauling, he filled the boat so full there was some danger it might sink. And his tired muscles protested when he rowed toward the shore.

"That man is some preacher," Simon muttered to himself. "And he knows fishin.' He knows people. He knows God. He knows fishin. Some kind a man. Some kind a man."

Then the feelings of inadequacy, inferiority came over him in wave after wave of depression. "What does a guy with all those smarts want with me, anyway?"

Simon had his little speech memorized by the time he pulled the heavy boat full of fish onto the shore. "Look, Jesus bar Joseph. You shouldn't be hanging around here with the likes of me. I'm not much good, see. I'm a working man. Can't keep up with all that religion stuff at the temple. So thanks for the tip about the fish. Help yourself to as many as you want. But I'll just get on with my work."

"Simon," said Jesus. "I helped you with your work. Why don't you come and help me with mine?"

"Look," said Simon. "All I know how to do is catch fish!"

"Fine," laughed Jesus. "Come, help me catch people."

Simon looked down at his big rough hands. He looked up at Jesus standing there smiling, laughing. He looked at the people sitting in small groups along the shore.

"Well, maybe just for a bit," he grumped.

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,  
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