

Not enough. This phrase can haunt us in so many areas of our life. Not enough money. Not enough time. Not enough practice. Not enough points to make the grade. Not enough strength or love or courage. I am not enough, the most heartbreaking one of them all. In our culture of constant excess of so many things, it's easy for us to believe there is always something more to be had, that we or what we have or do is simply not enough, because there's so much more out there than just our one, single, human self. In a terrible paradox, living in a space of such excess often leads us to feel like we are not enough, that we will never have enough.

At the beginning of our gospel story today, we meet Jesus in a place of excess, an excess of people who were pushing him to provide more words and insight and wisdom from God. But Jesus, being human as well as divine, had enough of the crowds for the time being, and instead moved away to approach just a few people on the lakeshore. He decided to teach through actions and relationships instead of simply words or stories. He saw the fishermen struggling to catch any fish at all, and decided to intervene.

Jesus helped his disciples in their moments of need, by meeting them where they were, and from their belief that Jesus could do what seemed impossible, they immediately were inspired to follow him.

The moment of need for the disciples was in their time of fear, their concern that they weren't catching enough fish that day - their source of income and purpose in life. Jesus worked through that which they knew intimately, by showing the abundance a life of following him provided through the abundance of fish. Even in the difficult, fearful moment, Jesus comes through with abundant love, abundant grace, abundant life itself.

When we start to really think about the abundance that God provides for us, it's common for us to feel like Simon Peter did in this story. He is overwhelmed by the abundance that God provided in this huge amount of fish - the biggest catch that these folks have gotten for a long time in their fishery careers, if ever. And Simon Peter doesn't feel worthy, like he is enough for all this abundance, and what it means for them. This abundance

of fish is not just the visual, but thinking about the financial and spiritual and physical benefits this bounty provides. This huge catch means a great deal of income for a while. It means that the fear and concern these fishermen held in their hearts and minds was cast out by the immediacy and abundance of Jesus. It means that they and their community won't go hungry. Jesus provided for them in the ways that truly mattered for their life and livelihood.

Perhaps we are not used to accepting an abundance or bounty of anything. We are more used to low expectations from other people, to things that are broken, to there never being quite enough to be satisfied. And Jesus directly challenges that perspective of scarcity, in huge and life-altering and life-saving and abundant ways. Jesus is enough when nothing else feels like it is enough. We, as a community, as the body of Christ in this world, with all the skills and insights and love and character we have, are enough. The body of Christ is the embodiment of abundance, thanks be to God.

So when we don't feel like we're enough, like Simon Peter, lean on this truth that it takes Jesus, and the life he promises to us, to know that we are enough. Simon Peter automatically highlights his flaws in the midst of the abundance of fish because it's easier to distract with what's wrong than to fully accept what is right and good and holy. He likely has thought he was sinful and unworthy for a long time and just cannot fathom that someone like him could be the recipient of such abundant love and care and purpose as what Jesus provides. But Jesus doesn't focus on just the most holy and upright and "good" people. Jesus makes a point and really centers his ministry, on reaching out to those who are hurting in any way, who are on the fringes of society, the ones who have the most to gain from the common way of doing things being turned upside down (or rightside up, as a mentor of mine likes to say).

Because Jesus saw more of what Simon Peter had to offer than just his past of a sinful nature, he calls him to follow him and begin "catching people" as he so wittily says. Jesus encourages Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen to let go of their fears about this new calling, "do not be afraid",

and roots his call in what they already know - catching people instead of fish. Catching people means encouraging a life of this abundance - of love, grace, faith, mercy, and indeed newness and joy - with Christ at the center. It means sharing the life-saving, redeeming good news of who Jesus is and embodying the joy of a life of following Christ.

The joy of catching people, encouraging them in the ways of Christian discipleship, is absolutely filled with joy, though it is not always easy. Jesus calls us to not only love our neighbors but to love our enemies as well, which is certainly much easier said than done. It can be hard to overcome or work through our lifelong fears and shortcomings like Simon Peter in order to shine the love of Christ forth for others, but that work is so life-giving and worth it for the joy of the journey it provides.

It's vulnerable to leave everything you knew, even on the hard days, behind to follow a new calling. We find comfort in the familiar, even if what is familiar isn't what always serves us or our neighbors best. And Jesus' disciples took that risk, embraced that vulnerability that comes with something new, to do what they knew they were called to. And Jesus was with them in every step of that embracing and that newness and even that fear.

But most importantly, it's not about what we do that convinces people of the reality of Christ, it's the love we have for God and the love we share for one another. It's about the faith and hope that love brings us - that we will see a future in that which we love, and we will never give up on who and what we love. It's about the faith that we may not be able to know or predict everything right away, but the trust that comes from loving relationships strengthens and guides us. This is what faith in Christ Jesus and in the God who created and continues to love us is all about - faith is about trusting the presence and future of God's creation. God's presence and God's creative redeeming power is here with us in abundance, and God's great love for us is the most abundant force of all.

Friends, even when we are in the midst of fear, of struggle, of pain, of not knowing or having answers, of feeling like we are not enough - know that God loves you still, with an abundance beyond measure. Know that Jesus calls us to share in this good news and indeed that a life of following the ways of Christ leads to abundant life for us and the world around us. May you be blessed in your journey of abundant, God-given love and in the way you employ your own self, gifts, and character for the service of God and neighbors. Thanks be to God, Amen.