

Lord, we've toiled all night and caught nothing, that us at times too. You hear the weariness in Peter's voice? Jesus tells Peter, put down his nets over there. That's foolishness, Peter knows it. He knows the lake well. You don't catch fish there in the day. **Lord, we've toiled all night, caught nothing.**

Jesus calls His first disciples begins with a ridiculous command. Then a miraculous catch of fish. Peter understands what this means – this Jesus is Lord of Creation, able to call what is not into being. Peter knows that he's not worthy to stand before the Lord. What's his response? He falls down, begs, **Depart from me, because I am a sinner, Lord.** Peter understands holiness –sin cannot abide in holiness.

Peter, like Isaiah, cries out -he's not worthy to be in the presence of God. With Peter, Isaiah, several others, we see the posture and words of one who comes before a holy God. And you are in His presence no less.

That's one of the problems with informal, casual worship. There's no such thing as casual holiness, or informal repentance, causal talk of sins, informal absolution and Lord's Supper. You cannot casually preach the cross and Him crucified.

Like Peter, haven't you felt the weariness of life's effort creep up on you? **Lord we've toiled all night and caught nothing.** That could be the motto of mankind.

People say, *"I've tried my best so I know God will take care of me"* or *"Yes, so and so was such a good person you just know that they're in heaven."* We all think in various ways the good things we do should have some reward. As if our toils and labors could gain God's favor and love! No, 1000x no! Our own efforts gain nothing before God.

Peter knows the right response to this fact: **I'm a sinful man, Lord.** You see, God isn't interested in how sincere or hard you try. He's interested in perfect obedience and holiness. And this you cannot do.

You're in the same boat as Peter. His efforts could not catch the fish, but a Word from Jesus gave him the fish. The Lord's miracles show you His concern over you, faithfully caring for your everyday needs, both physical and spiritual. He never fails you in this. Although we often fail to see it and often unthankful.

What power in the Word of God? Peter catches a glimpse of God's power; and it terrifies Him. And it should. God's Law crushes and kills

and forces the pitiful sinner to see themselves as they truly are: unworthy, deserving nothing good, truly are nothing without Christ.

It's strange, isn't it? On one hand, Christ commands us to work, but on the other hand He shows us that our work- on our own- accomplishes nothing.

And this is such a good thing, amazing life to live then: to work in joy, out of love, in response to what's our Lord has done, the Kingdom is already ours -and not to live under threat or coercion or striving to earn His love, earn His gifts, earn heaven. Joy that He takes care of all things and it's not up to my efforts for anything in life that truly matters. Our lives, our hands, are empty without the word and works, the grace and presence of God.

You cannot earn your salvation, holiness, righteousness – but a Word from Jesus gives all things to you.

Depart from me, I'm a sinful man, Lord. Peter's sinful, as you and I; doesn't deserve God's mercy and care. But thanks be to God that our Lord does not leave it there. **Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.** Peter is called to the office of the holy ministry. And you see what Christian preaching is all about - delivering Christ and the forgiveness of sins, to catch people in the net of the Gospel, into the boat, that is, the Church. It's no accident the portion of the church you're sitting is called the nave, Latin for boat, where the word navy comes from. The boat is where Peter and the others come into the forgiving presence of Jesus; so it is with you. Just like Noah and his family in the ark, so also you're kept safe here, in this place.

Lord we've toiled all night and caught nothing. Do not despair, do not be afraid. God knows your sin, your weaknesses and failings. He knows your faults, your problems better than you know them yourself. The mercy of God is that He still feeds you and takes care of you. Despite your sin, He is not ashamed of you. He loves to forgive. He not only takes care of you for the things of this world, the fish you need and the like, but feeds you His Supper for the forgiveness of sins. He doesn't punish you for what your sins deserve but gives you the works of Christ that flow from His cross; each of you called to live a life in His works. You are holy, like Peter, **do not be afraid**, for now on be receiving what is given, the power of this Word, to call what is not into being, is means is. The Lord has provided. Receive what He gives.