

If You Say So...

Have you ever had times in your life where you had a problem... and a friend told you what to do to solve the problem... but you were not convinced it would work? ... You had your doubts... but he or she convinced you to trust their advice. ... Finally... you basically said... *"I don't know if this will work... but **if you say so**... I'll do what you say."* ... You were not convinced... but you went ahead and trusted the person giving you the counsel. ... I've faced situations like this in my past.

This is the sentiment of Peter in our passage today from Luke. ... Peter's sentiment mirrors the attitudes of many Christians today toward the Lord Jesus - possibly (even) **you**.

Sometimes... (hopefully not often)... when we are weak in our faith... we have the attitude with the Lord, *"I don't know about this promise Lord, I don't know about this command... but **if you say so**... I'll go ahead and do what you say."* ... The **consequences** of this kind of thinking... are found in today's passage. ... Let's see what happens when we have the attitude toward Jesus - **"If You say so..."**

I am **not** (actually) going to preach from one passage today. There is another passage... that isn't even in Luke's Gospel... that I am going to (equally) rely on. ... Our passage in Luke tells of a miracle involving Jesus and Peter... and a miraculous catch of fish. This story... (that is found in Luke chapter five) ... is book-ended by another absolutely parallel miracle (found in John 21.) One happened at the beginning of Christ's ministry...

when He called His disciples. The other happened after His resurrection... when He called His disciples to carry-on without His physical presence.

Let's read together our account in Luke 5. ... I'm (then) going to turn and read the second account as well... because you can't FULLY understand the one without the other. We want to find out the fullest picture of what God has to tell us from this miracle... for our own lives. So let's first read Luke 5:1–11.

Luke 5:1-11

Now let me read you the parallel passage. (It's in John 21.) ... When I say parallel... I don't mean it's John's report of the same incident. It's a separate incident of the same miracle... that Christ did again... at a different time... Our taking them both together... will deepen our understanding.

John 21:1-12

What do we learn from this two-part miracle? ... Jesus repeated this miracle... because (obviously) ONE time wasn't enough. ... What is He trying to teach us? ... On the surface of it... there is an awful lot to think about. (I hope you have three hours of your time to give me right now...)

Something immediately grabs our attention when we read these accounts. In both Luke 5 and John 21... The fishermen had worked hard all night and did not catch anything. ... But... *Master... if you say so... I will (once more) let down the nets...*"

Whenever you tell a child... “*You must do this*”... commonly we hear: “*Why?*” ... In other words... it’s really *not enough* that you just told them. They want to know *what the reason is*. ... It’s a little irritating... isn’t it... So we bark: “*Because I said so!*” and expect the matter to be settled.

But if we are honest... we actually *don’t* think that it’s so wrong for a child to say: “*Okay, give me the reason why I am to do this.*” ... Because that is how *we* often respond to the Lord. “*What’s that, Lord?! You want me to give my last dollar to that homeless person... but what if they just use it to buy booze...?*” “*You want me to use my precious time off to go down to the church - on a weeknight...?*” “*Huh? I am supposed to speak up – when I know I am about to get rejected... maybe even hurt?*”
Why...?!!!

Here’s Simon Peter... and he has absolutely no reason to do this. He has absolutely no reason to put out into deep water and to let down the nets. No reason at all. Not a bit of evidence for it. No reason.

Peter was a veteran fisherman. He knew when to fish and where to fish. Letting the nets down *now* did not seem wise at all. ... This was not the *time* to fish. These seasoned fishermen were washing their nets — they fished at night. ... In Simon’s mind... this would be a fool’s errand. ... Fish retreat to the depths to stay cool during the day. ... Peter *knew to fish at night* ... when fish come to the surface to feed.

It was a demanding request (to say the least.) ... Jesus was asking a man who had not slept all night... who had spent the night examining tangled and empty nets... to load *a thousand pounds* of soggy water-logged rope

mesh... row out to deep water... and throw those nets back out — all at midday! ... Besides... how audacious (it must have seemed) for Jesus - a *carpenter* from Nazareth) to ask a (seasoned) expert Galilean fisherman - who had spent his life on the lake... to do something so foolish-looking *while crowds on the seashore looked-on...*?

But what does he say? ... “Master... **If You say so...**” ... [P A U S E] ...

I have often wondered **why** Peter actually did what Jesus asked. ... But we should remember that Peter had just witness an incredible day of Jesus healing a demon possessed man in the synagogue... and then witnessed Jesus spend the whole night performing miracles of healing to everyone in Capernaum who came to Him. Peter knew that Jesus could do the unimaginable!

What an example this is for you and me! ... When Jesus’ word comes... and it is demanding... its natural for us to have some initial reluctance. ... But if we are sure He is the One Who is speaking... and there is no doubt about what He wants... we are to do it. ... “Master... ***if You say so...***”

The Bible tells us **that’s** enough of a reason to do something. ... “*Lord Jesus, I have no reason to do this. It doesn’t seem practical. I’ve tried it before,*” or “*It doesn’t seem to work. Everybody says it’s not going to work.*” ... ***if You say so ...***”

Do you do things just because Jesus says so... or do you more often say: “*I have to have a reason*”? ... “*Here’s what Jesus says to do, and then I have my own understanding.*” ... “*Is it practical?*” ... “*Will it bring forth my agenda?*” ... “*Will it help me?*”

Whenever we say those things... it means that we are only allowing ourself to be advised by Him. ... Many people believe that they are Christians... but He is only an advisor to them. They remain in charge of their own life. Jesus is not their Lord at all!

If you're doing what Christ wants... because it looks like it makes sense... it looks like it's practical... and it looks like it'll fit your goals... you don't really love Christ. Jesus said that if we love Him – we will obey His commands. ... So what do you think – is it possible to be a Christian and NOT love Him...? (My answer is “no.”) Peter shows us what it really means to be obedient. Peter shows us what every Christian should look like.

(O.K. Well.. that was quite heavy!) ... But none of these things is the main point of the text. ... None of these things is the main thing the miracle is designed to teach. ... So... what's the main thing the miracle is designed to teach? ... To answer that... I would first have you notice that there is so much that is the same with these two miracles.

1. It's the same problem

They've been fishing and they can't find anything.

2. It's the same response by Jesus

Jesus says, “*Do something at my word.*” ... In the beginning He says, “*Put out into deep water, and let down your nets, at my word. Do it just because I say so.*” ... In John 21 (the second time)... He does the same thing. He asks something very foolish-looking. He says: “*Just throw your net on the other side.*”

That seems ridiculous! *“Just throw it on the other side? We’ve been out here all night. We’ve been throwing it every single place.” “Just throw it over there.”* ... He’s on the shore. ... They’re a hundred yards off. ... How the heck does he know? ... There’s no good reason to obey - unless it’s Jesus. ... They have the same problem in both situations... Jesus says: *“Obey Me just because I say so... just because it’s Me.”*

3. The same miracle happens

There’s an incredible... miraculous catch of fish.

4. In both cases, Simon Peter has a very strong reaction

In both cases... it has nothing to do with the fish. In neither case does Simon Peter say: *“This is great! Look at all these fish.”* Peter always knows the point of the miracle is not the fish... but it’s to teach us about Jesus.

So those are all of the things that are the same... but what’s the difference? ... The difference is very striking. ... Peter responds in a totally opposite way. ... In Luke 5 he says, *“Go away. Get away from me. I want nothing to do with you.”*

But in John 21... Peter acts like a crazy man. ... He jumps out of the boat before it gets close to shore.... And swims **TO** Him. What’s going on here? ... Same problem. ... Same miracle. ... Same amazement. ... But two totally different reactions. This difference (I believe) is what the miracles are supposed to teach us?

Peter’s different reaction teaches us two things. ... It teaches us (first of all) about the holiness of Jesus Christ. ... Then it teaches us (secondly) what it

really means to be a Christ-follower... and not one who (merely) thinks being around God and the church is enough.

First - *what it teaches us about the holiness of Jesus Christ*. In both cases... Jesus is showing forth the fact that He is a person of awesomeness. ... He is Lord of fish and fishermen! He is the Lord of nature... and the Lord of men. A person of unbelievable knowledge... and unbelievable power. But in Luke 5... we see the **normal human response** to the absolute holiness that Jesus possesses.

(LISTEN! This is very important to see here.) *To get near God is a very, very unpleasant experience – for anyone!* We see anybody who actually gets near to God... finds they are in deep trouble. ... Anybody who gets near to God (the real God... the Biblical God)... falls into a tremendous... **dire** situation. ... There's pain. Often there's hurt.

Consider Jacob. In Genesis 32... he is at a crisis time in his life. ... He's all by himself. He's trying to go back to face his brother Esau (who he'd wronged years before.) ... As he's praying... Someone jumps him in the dark... and he wrestles with Jacob. ... The Person has tremendous power... and Jacob wrestles for hours. ... Jacob is a strong man himself. But he can't overcome this Person... and the day begins to dawn.

The mysterious wrestler said to him: "*I have to go.*" Jacob was starting to figure out that this is not just a man... and he said: "*I'm not going to let you go.*" ... The power of this figure had been so great... He showed Jacob that He had not been putting forth all of His power on Jacob. (He's just been playing with Jacob.) Then He reaches out and touches Jacob's hip and

absolutely destroys it... shatters it... puts it out of joint. ... Jacob never walks right again. All He did was touch it... and Jacob was in absolute agony. ... Jacob realized it was the Lord.

The reason the Lord had to leave before the sun came up was that for Jacob to see His face would be for him to die. ... Jacob was amazed. When it was all gone... he called the place Peniel. The name *Peniel* means the face of God.

If you read the chapter... you'll see Jacob called it the face of God... because he said, "*I saw the face of God and lived,*" which wasn't exactly true... by the way. ... He only came close to seeing the face of God... and he was permanently wounded. ... He boasts as if he felt like he got away with murder. "*I came that close. I was in the presence of God, and all I did was get permanently disabled.*" He thought he had come out pretty well.

(And) look at Job. He gets near God... and he actually has an experience of the presence of God. He says, "*I despise myself in dust and ashes.*" Isaiah (a prophet) gets near God in Isaiah 6. ... When he actually sees God... he falls down and says, "*I feel like I'm coming apart.*"

Psychologically... he is absolutely destroyed. What's going on here? It's not that hard to understand. We always have this kind of experience in the presence of super greatness.

We can see this on a FAR-FAR lesser scale than the holiness of God. Have you ever had a friend or have you ever watched how people relate to somebody who's unbelievably smart... unbelievably talented... unbelievably attractive? ... We often see kind of a love/hate relationship with them... right?

On the one hand... you like that this person is your friend... you kind of want to be just like them ... yet you hate them. ... What is that? At a very tiny level, it's like the response to being in God's presence. (Think for a moment) It only makes sense that if there is a God... He would be the ultimate of greatness. ... You would be attracted and you would be repulsed. ... You would be fascinated and you would be frightened. Do you know why?

It's simple. - You know you're ***not*** holy. ... (You know you're not great.) ... The reason you're both attracted to someone who's a lot prettier than you... and at the same time you kind of hate the person... is you like being around them... *but you sense your lack*. You are made very aware of it. ... You know you're not as smart. ... You know you're not as talented. ... You like to be around others who are very talented... (you're affirmed by their respect and their interest in you)... but you don't like being shown *so clearly* that you are so lacking. ... You feel threatened that they'll expose you to be the mediocrity that you are to others.

Anybody who gets near the real Jesus (anybody who gets near the real God... there's a fascination... and there is tremendous fear.) "I want it, but I'm scared to death of it. I love it. I hate it."

That's the problem with the human condition. Take a look at mankind (in general.) Men (and women) can't live with God; and we can't live without God. ... We are attracted in all sorts of ways... and yet at the same time... when man gets near to the real God... there is revulsion. ... *"I can't believe in a God like that. I hate the whole idea of a holy God, a wrathful God, a just God, a God who is a judge."* ... Do you remember how much you hated

God in the past? Maybe you've mocked Him intellectually (the very idea of the God of the Bible.)

"I reject the whole idea of a God who sends people to hell - a God who is perfect (a God who is holy.) ... The Ten Commandments... Mount Sinai ..."
You hate that. Why? ... It exposes you. ... But then... as the years went by... perhaps you realized: *"I need something. I need something. I need him. I need him. I don't believe in him. At least I don't want that kind of God, but I want some kind of God."* What is it? *"Go away from me."* When you get near the real God... you say: *"Go away"* ... and yet you want to be with Him. Now let me apply this quickly before we go to the last point.

If you get near the real God... you will (initially) experience this conflict. This is a great test of whether your walk with God has the air of reality to it. If you have a view of God that says: "I feel very close to God when I'm just out on a lake in a boat. ... I don't need to come to church. ... I don't need to read the Bible. ... I just feel near to God when I'm with people... when I'm helping people. ... That's when I feel near to God..." - **if when you get near to your God there's no conflict (there's no trauma) it's not the real God.**

If you see how we react to greatness in fellow human beings... it only makes sense... if there's a God at all... your reaction to God himself... (the GREATEST of all GREATNESS)... would be this trauma. ... How in the world could you have a real God... if when you draw near to this God... there's no conflict? ... (Listen) when you get near the real God... God will be like a storm on the lake... which always stirs up the junk from the bottom. ... When you get near God... there's conflict... there's trauma. It

stirs up gunk out of the bottom of your heart. You see yourself for who you are. You wrestle.

Do you not see that it might actually be better... to be far away from God than just to get near Him? ... Many folks start coming to church with the thought that it would be good to simply try to hang out with Jesus... maybe read about Him or think about Him a little more often... and try to live a better life. ... *"I'm going to try to obey the Ten Commandments, and read the Sermon on the Mount, and pray more, and come to church, and do one of these religious activities, and help the poor..."* ... If you do that... in the very beginning... there'll be a little relief and your conscience will feel good.

(But LISTEN!) The closer you get to God by hanging out... reading the Bible... reading about Christianity... you will find you'll start to feel worse... because just to get religious ... You're going to find that the closer you get ... God is a consuming fire. It's going to start to burn you. You'll pull back. You'll start to feel inadequate.

You'll hear what the Bible says. How you should be loving one another. You'll learn better what humility is... and how it is required of you.. You'll learn that grace and compassion are required of you. ... You see? ... Just to get near Him... (just to hang out with Jesus) ... will eventually burn you because He's holy. He's going to make you feel terrible about yourself if you just hang out with him... if you are just religious. It can be one of the worst things you can possibly do... just get a little closer God. To get a little closer to God is traumatic.

That is why we hear so often: *“I’ve tried organized religion... and it just made me feel terrible.”* ... That’s the Amazed Peter of Luke 5. That’s the Amazed Peter... who felt good about the fact that, “I have the best rabbi in Palestine in my boat. I’m going to be one of His followers. I’m going to be around Him. I’m going to follow Him. I’m going to be near Him.

I’m certain that Simon Peter felt pretty good about himself... when Christ asked him if He could borrow his boat to finish His sermon. *“Yeah... sure! You healed all those people... I’m glad to help out. What an honor for You to ask me...”*

Then what happened when he saw Who Jesus really was? ... Very often this is what happens to us... just like this. ... When we first begin to come to Christ... something in our lives shows us we’re inadequate and we need Him. We need God in some general way. So you come to a Bible study. You come to some Christian ministry. You come to church. ... You’re just trying to get a little closer... trying to get a little bit of a boost or something. At first you feel good... but eventually... you’ll feel terrible. You’ll feel just like Peter.

You’ll say: *“Go away from me”*... because you’ll feel inadequate. ... You’ll say: *“I can never live up to these standards.”* ... The closer you get to Him... the more you see what you’re supposed to be like. ... You say: *“I can’t do it.”* - It’ll traumatize you.

What changed Peter? ... (The Peter of Luke 5 was a traumatized Peter.)
What made Peter the Peter of John 21?

The thing we have to realize about the Peter of John 21... is that Peter has not seen Jesus... since he denied Him three times. ... Peter has unresolved guilt. ... Peter is much more aware of his sin in John 21 than he was in Luke 5. ... Peter has now spent three years with Jesus. He knows all about how he's supposed to live.

He had the tremendous test of his Master being crucified... and he denied Him. He chickened out. He was a coward. Yet this time... he runs as fast as he can to get right to Jesus' side. Why? What happened?

He understands the gospel. He understands the danger of only being near Christ – but not going all the way in. When Peter denied the Lord – he saw that he had not gone all the way in. Just to be near... but not go all the way in... is worse than to be far away.

You see, the point of the gospel is not: “*Well... you were kind of far away... so now get near.*” Oh no. The point is not to get near to God. ... What you want to do is you want to get into God. ... You want to get into Christ. ... You want to get into Him.

The way to do that is to realize you're not saved by your good deeds but to see what Jesus did for you and to rest and rely on that completely. That's the only explanation for the change that happened in Peter's life. Here's Peter. He needs forgiveness. He feels so sinful because of his denial... and yet now his sins drive him to Jesus.

So here's the big application of these two passages. ... Are you a person who is just getting near Jesus... or are you going all the way in? ... Here's

the way you can tell. ... Are you a Luke 5 Peter... or are you a John 21 Peter?

In other words... when you feel the worst... when your sin is most evident to you... when you've just blown it in the worst way... when you've just done something you know is wrong... when you feel like the greatest failure... does that sense of failure make you **not** want to come to church... **not** want to see Jesus... **not** want to pray? ... Do you feel like... "*Oh my goodness... how can I even go to Him?*"

OR - does it make you say: "*I want to get as close to Him as possible... I'll jump out of this boat... I really want to get to Him. I'll Swim. I'll Wade. I'll Run. I want to get right to Him... and be made right with Him*" - ?

Does your sin drive you to Him? ... Does it bring you into fellowship with Him... or does it completely block your fellowship with Him when you feel like a sinner? ... That'll tell you whether you're Peter of Luke 5 or Peter of John 21.

One last thing. ... And Boy(!) ... Do I ever need this reminder! Here is a very powerful way to know if you are a Luke 5 Peter... or more of a John 21 Peter. ... You're going to be very irritable if you're just **near God** and not in. You're going to be so grumpy and so guilty and so anxious if you're just around Jesus but not in. Go in. Go in. Go in.

You can start by obeying Him - just because He said so. "**Master... if You say so!**"