

Weekly Encouragement

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Jesus Provides

By Rev. Peter Eng

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"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him (Luke 5:10-11)

These are extraordinarily hard times in America. Unemployment is almost 10%. The unemployed who have given up looking for work are not included in this number. Nor are the underemployed. Nor are those who have taken severe pay cuts. At least one in five are hurting in some way.

When a person has seen nothing but rejection letters, or failures in business, or in relationships, it becomes too painful to hope and try

again. How can they hope when it only yields disappointments? How can we try again when each attempt, followed by rejection, undermines our self-worth even more?

The disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Fishing is a business. Not to catch fish when the boats are launched means losing money. There are overheads, labor costs, equipment costs and the cost of wear and tear. Even though they were not experiencing a deep recession, in some ways, our experience is similar to James, John, Simon Peter, and Andrew (?).

They toil and hope, but the stingy lake will not reward them. Then Jesus asks Simon to set out again, and to cast the net one more time. It seems futile. They have been toiling all night and are tired. It is now day and the likelihood of catching anything is even less, but since Jesus asks, Peter will do it.

That single cast yields a harvest so bountiful that they need help. Peter is the first to realize what is happening. First he realizes he is in the presence of holiness and power. Peter knows he is unworthy of Jesus.

This is no trick or special knowledge about fishing. It is choked full of meaning. Jesus turns to Peter and says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." He gives them a new direction in life and addresses the greatest hindrance to answering that call. They will now fish for men and not fish.

As much as Jesus is able to make fish appear from nowhere, he is able to provide for their needs.

Some of us may get the impression that God's provision means a predictable and generous direct deposit into our bank account every so often. I think it is useful to trace Peter's financial life from this point and see how God provided for him.

Peter, Andrew, James and John owned a fishing business. It is likely that when they followed Jesus, they did not dispose of their business. We observe that Peter and the other disciples went back to fishing without the need for advance planning ([John 21:2-3](#)). This ability to return to fishing at will suggests the business remained under his control in some way.

During Jesus' ministry, Jesus and his disciples were supported financially and physically through the largess of some women disciples ([Lk 8:3](#); cf. [Matt 27:55](#); [Mark 15:41](#)). If Peter, Andrew, James and John had their fishing business, it is apparent there were insufficient funds for them to support Jesus and the twelve. The needs of this itinerant group were

supplied by these generous and committed women disciples.

When Peter said he would go back fishing after the resurrection, it may not be entirely out of boredom or aimlessness. He had a family to feed and bills to pay. Now that Jesus has died and risen again, their support structure is gone and he is at a loss. Interestingly, Jesus affirms this exact point after his resurrection and gave the disciples a miraculous catch a second time, to remind them that his call for them to be fishers of men; and his ability to provide for them, have not changed from his original call.

After the ascension of Jesus, how did Peter survive? We know that at some point, the believers supported the ministry of Peter and the other apostles ([1 Cor 9:4-6](#)). It is impossible for this to happen immediately after the resurrection or ascension of Christ. So they had to go through a transition for which we know nothing.

When Jesus told Peter twice that his call came with an assurance of provision ([Lk 5](#); [Jn 21](#)), it was a double affirmation. Jesus is true to his promise and Peter's needs were taken care of. But it did not mean they were always well supplied or that they did not have to humbly accept the support of generous believers.

Jesus had been faithful to Peter. But did not Jesus also tell all of us, "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things will be added to you?" ([Matt 6:33](#)).

Desperate times drive people to desperate measures. But this is also one of the few occasions for American Christians who have enjoyed so much prosperity to have their faith proved by hardship. We must choose to do the right thing for the Kingdom of God and trust God to provide for our needs.

God's provision is not exempt from the vicissitudes of life. But this provision comes from God's faithful promise to all who obey him. I am sure Elijah would rather not have his bread and meat brought to him by ravens ([1 Kings 17:6](#)); or a diet limited to bread ([1 Kings 17:7-16](#)). Just like the Israelites in the wilderness who have every reason to marvel and thank God for the miraculous Manna, and Elijah for his food in times of famine, we have every reason to thank God for his provisions in hard times, even if these provisions are not as pleasing as those in the years of plenty.

Rarely does God provide to meet our greed. But he faithfully provides to meet our need.

When the bubble has burst and financial disaster falls on the just and the unjust without distinction, the just shall continue to live by faith. The just shall learn greater trust and shall continue to practice integrity even when it is costly. The Christian who would not be distracted by financial challenges but seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness sets in operation a divine dynamic. It is the dynamic of God's provision.

The season for mindless spending is over. Instead we hear a clarion call to trust in God, to integrity in our dealings, and to simplicity in our own lives.

Set out a little way from shore, and cast that net one more time.

Jesus provides.

Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.

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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.