May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

“*Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch*” (Lk 5:4b).

On the surface it would be easy to hear today’s story as one in which Jesus fulfills the desires of Peter and the others; the desire to catch fish, the desire to be successful, the desire to make a living. I don’t think that’s a correct reading of this story. I don’t think that’s what happened. I think there is more to this than fish, success, and making a living. Here’s why I say that. What did they do with the fish, their success, the money they would have made at the market, once they got back to shore? “*They left everything and followed [Jesus]*” (Lk 5:11b). They walked away. Those things were not the end of the story but the beginning of the story.

You’ve probably had times when you said, “If only I could … go here, do this, get that, find the right woman or man, have a child or grandchild, get that job or promotion, buy a new house, be given a particular opportunity.” And then one day you went, you did, you got, and maybe it turned out exactly like you wanted or not at all like you expected, but either way you were left with a yearning, a feeling there was something more, a desire for something else. Hasn’t that happened to you?

That doesn’t mean those things we desired were bad or that we were wrong. It just means that even within those there is a “desire beyond desire.”

It was the “desire beyond desire” that let Peter answer Jesus, “*Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets*” (Lk 5:5b). Jesus knew Peter had a deeper desire. Jesus did not magically fill Peter’s nets. He touched Peter’s deeper desire. And that’s what he does for us. We all have that deeper desire.

Jesus also experienced that “desire beyond desire.” I think that’s what he was talking about when he told the disciples, “*I have food to eat that you do not know about*” (John 4:32). It’s what was going on when “*he set his face to go to Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:51). It was what he was seeking in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said, “*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done*” (Luke 22:42).

We want to connect with and be known by something beyond what we can acquire, gain, or accomplish for ourselves. We want meaning and fullness in our lives. We want our lives to matter and count for something. We want to feel alive. We want to be whole and complete. We want to experience and live in the good, the true, the beautiful. We want life abundant. Isn’t that how you want to live and what you want for yourself and those you love? That’s our “desire beyond desire.” Jesus is not our “desire beyond desire.” He is the voice and the calling of our “desire beyond desire.” He points to, guides, and accompanies us to our “desire beyond desire.”

What if those places in which we feel stuck, frustrated, empty, restless, disappointed, as if we’ve missed the boat, are the deep waters into which we are to let down our nets? Jesus did not let Peter and the others run away from their exhaustion, their disappointment, their empty nets. He sent them back to the deep water to let down their nets for a catch and they “*were amazed at the catch of fish*” (Lk 5:9), “*so many fish that there nets were beginning to break*.” (Lk 5:6).

So instead of washing the nets and going home let’s open our eyes, our ears, our hearts to the deep waters of life. Let’s be attentive to what lies below the surface. Let’s make ourselves open and available to the “desire beyond desire.” It is always unfolding before us and it is never just one thing. It comes to us in a thousand different ways. It changes throughout the seasons and circumstances of our lives.

That “desire beyond desire” is why we still cast our nets even after a night of having caught nothing. It’s why we struggle to do the right thing and to live with integrity. It’s why we forgive and make amends. It’s why we speak for justice and the dignity of every human being. It’s why we open our hearts and risk loving. It’s why we get up each morning and “put out into the deep water.”

I don’t know what this “desire beyond desire” is for you. But I know this. There is always something coming to us in what we desire, something more than what we know or can name as our desire, something that will stir the pot of our present desire and take us beyond our usual fishing grounds. And it’s happening in your life and my life.  Amen.