



SIEBENQUELL

The Wildness of God: The Way of the Holy Springtime V
**Jesus stakes a claim to
our strength**



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As we move step by step through this Gospel story, the wildness of God is unfolding before our eyes. In this reflection we go on to discover that Jesus now makes a claim on Peter's strength. First, he asks him to »put out a little way from the shore.« Once this is done, the story tells us that Jesus »sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.« In order for that to work, Peter needs to hold the boat in position, which requires yet more strength as he prevents the waves from driving the boat back to shore. Hardly has Jesus finished speaking, when he makes the next claim on Peter's strength: »Put out into the deep water«, meaning he expects him to row even further out onto the lake. Finally he says to Peter »let down your nets for a catch«, once again making a claim to his strength by asking him to do the physically demanding work of casting the nets, after an entire night of doing that without anything to show for it. As easy as it is to read the story, if we were living it out in real time, we would very soon notice how much strength it would cost us.

Furthermore, Jesus is not staking his claim on Peter's strength while his vigour is in full bloom and his vitality is yet untaxed. He is tired after having spent so much of his strength labouring through the night. It is one thing to ask a person to invest their strength while they are fresh, invigorated and full of eagerness. It is altogether another matter, when they are tired, worn and exhausted. Yet, as in all the steps before, this does not hinder Jesus in the least. This is how the wildness of God breaks into our lives.

Here, again, we are confronted with a conflict between what we often want and what God's desire for us is. We often want life to be easy. God desires the fullness of life for us. The two are not the same.

Today many people believe that a straightforward and easy life is their birthright. There is almost a sense of entitlement involved, and we are irritated and sometimes furious when anything challenges or changes the ease of our days. We deem anything that makes our life easier to be automatically good, never reflecting for a moment whether these things are also making our lives more superficial and empty. Our technology is praised almost exclusively for its ability to make our lives easier. Yet, even a cursory glance at the same technology would make us realise, that we cannot claim that it has brought depth, purpose and meaning to our lives. The ease is there. It is the fullness that is lacking.

The problem is obvious: fullness will always demand something of us. That is why Jesus stakes a claim to our strength, because it is the prerequisite for the fullness of life. Those nets, brimming with life and vitality at the end of the story do not magically fill themselves. This occurs only after fishermen show a willingness to invest their strength, in an hour of personal weariness. It is ever the way of our Master, our mentor and teacher and friend Jesus. There are no twelve baskets full of leftovers without the disciples looking for bread and fish, offering it up and then distributing it among the people sitting on the green grass. There will be no 600 liters of the finest wine, if there are no servants willing to lug 600 liters of water to the six stone jugs.

The fullness of life means sharing and investing our whole life, not just the selective hours of strength, joy and lightness. Jesus is not demanding of us what he is unwilling to do himself. The fullness of life he so desires for us is something which he values so highly, that he invests his strength to make it happen. To bring us the fullness of life, costs Jesus a great deal of strength.

Jesus became bread: Here is one who says: » I am the bread of life.« That awakens the taxing expectation in people that he will give them satiety, nourishment and life.

Jesus became mercy, and describes the mercy that he embodies in narrative form. »He went to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own mount, brought him to an inn and took care of him.« Lk 10, 34

Our Master became a word of encouragement: He will not only speak words of encouragement to friends and disciples, but also to a scribe who is no close associate of his: »You are not far from the kingdom of God«. Mark 12,34

Our mentor became a word of welcome. He will describe the heart of his father and our father in the story of yet another father: »The father saw him coming from afar and had compassion on him. He ran to meet the Son, embraced him and kissed him«. Lk 15,20

Our teacher became hunger: Jesus knows this hunger: »With great longing I have longed to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering«. Lk 22,15

Our friend became needy to bring us the fullness of life: »Foxes have dens, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.« Mt 8,20

The Word became tenderness: »And he took the children in his arms, and laid his hands on them and blessed them.« Mk 10,16

The Lord of all life become tears: For he not only sees the tears of Mary of Bethany, but weeps with her, at her brother's tomb. (cf. Jn 11, 33-35)

Jesus also became a cry of pain: For the Word made flesh also knows the depths of human despair when he cries out, »My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?« Mt 27, 46

The Word also became understanding at the heart of suffering: »But Jesus prayed: Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing! « Luke 23,34

Jesus became every word that the human heart needs in order that it might have life in fullness.

Above all, he became a word of love: »No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends.« John 15, 13

This is the wildness of God. Jesus will not shield us from life. Instead, he will expose us to the fullness of life. His love will guide us to the dangerous, unpredictable, challenging wildness of the fullness of life. That fullness will mean, that like Jesus, we must become bread, mercy, encouragement, welcome, hunger, neediness, tenderness, tears, a cry of pain and a deep understanding at the heart of suffering. This is what the fullness of life looks like. It stakes a claim to God's strength and on ours. Anyone who not only likes Jesus, but takes him seriously, must take this risk. That is why he made a tired fisherman strain his muscles to row a boat and cast a net. Without this, the story would end with empty nets. Instead, it ends like this: »When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.«

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