

One spring afternoon not long after she and her new husband John moved into the community, Marianne Siebert of Florence, Kansas, decided to visit their elderly neighbors, the McLindens, a mile and a half up the road. The weather was perfect so Marianne saddled her 12-year-old Arabian stallion. Upon arrival, she dismounted and, reins in hand, approached the back door. Apparently, her neighbor had polished the glass in the storm door, because it shone like a mirror. Marianne knocked twice and waited with her horse, Phar, at her shoulder. She decided her neighbors weren't home and started to leave when she noticed that Phar was staring at the gray stallion in the glass with fascination. He squealed and pawed. So did the other stallion. **He was staring, of course, at his own reflection.**

Marianne tugged on Phar's reins, and he refused to move. Marianne was beginning to get a bad feeling. She became more forceful and tugged and slapped Phar with the reins. **Then he moved all right. He swung around, and with both hind feet, bashed in the door!** Glass flew down the inside stairs, the metal grillwork caved in. At that point, Marianne was sweating bullets and was just about to beat a hasty retreat when, from inside the house, she heard Mrs. McLinden call to her husband, **"Bud, I think there's someone at the door."**

"I could have strangled Phar," says Marianne. "Instead, I helped Mr. and Mrs. McLinden clean up the glass, promised to pay for the door and got out of there. My reputation, however, soon was widespread throughout the county: **'If Marianne Siebert comes to visit, be sure and get there after the first knock, or she'll kick in your door.'**"

**We often speak of OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING.** Someone has said that if opportunity came disguised as temptation, one knock would be enough. That may be so. **We also think of CHRIST STANDING AT THE DOOR KNOCKING.** The only handle is on the inside. **HOWEVER, He does not crash down the door. We must open it ourselves.**

**THESE (2) IMAGES... "opportunity knocking and Christ knocking" JOIN TOGETHER in our reading for the day.** Two fishing boats stand empty by the side of a lake. The fishermen have given up for the day. They are standing near the boats cleaning out their nets. Their faces are weary with discouragement. They are not fishing for sport. This is their way of making a living and they are not making much progress.

**If any of you who have ever been sales people know the feeling.** Prospect after prospect says NO!! **Someone has said that is why they have movies in the daytime, for salespeople who can't handle one more rejection.**

**Have any of you ever started your own business? If you have, you may have known that feeling. There are many rewards, but also many times when the wolf stands poised at your door. Farmers know what it's like.** You realize with a sinking feeling that this year's crop is not measuring up. And it's not because you haven't worked. That is the frustrating part. You've worked harder than ever. But the rain came at the wrong time. One week sooner and you would have had a bumper crop.

**Many students know about times of discouragement.** You've worked hard preparing for a test in school. But somehow you seemed to have studied the wrong assignment. You had hoped for an A, but now you'll settle just to pass. **We've all been there, haven't we?**

A troubled man paid a visit to his rabbi. A wise and good old rabbi, as all rabbis try to be. "Rabbi," said he, wringing his hands, **"I am a failure. More than half the time I do not succeed in doing what I must do."**

"Oh?" said the rabbi. "Please say something wise, rabbi," said the man. After much pondering, the rabbi spoke as follows: **"Ah, my son, I give you wisdom: Go and look on page 930 of THE NEW YORK TIMES ALMANAC for the year 1970, and you will find peace of mind maybe."**

**"Ah," said the man, and he went away and did that thing. Now this is what he found: The List off the lifetime Batting Avg. of Baseball's Greatest!!** Ty Cobb, the greatest slugger of them all, had a lifetime average of only .367. Even Babe Ruth didn't do so good. So the man went back to the rabbi and said in a questioning tone: "Ty Cobb " .367

"that's it?" "Right," said the rabbi. "Ty Cobb" .367. He got a hit once out of every three times at bat. He didn't even bat .500 " **so what can you expect already?"**

**"Ah," said the man who thought he was a wretched failure because only half the time he did not succeed at what he must do.**

**All of us get discouraged at times.** We can sympathize with these fishermen standing beside their boats with nothing to show for their labors. **ALL THEY CAN DO AFTER A BAD DAY IS CLEAN THEIR NETS AND HOPE FOR A BETTER DAY TOMORROW.**

**THEN, INTO THE SCENE STEPS JESUS.** *What powerful words, "into the scene steps Jesus".* This is the testimony of former major league baseball player Dave Dravecky, who is coping with the loss of his pitching arm to cancer. He could be finished psychologically and physically dealing with such a devastating burden, **but into the scene stepped Jesus.** Dravecky puts it this way, *"I am not getting through the loss of my arm because I am a great 'COPER'. I'm getting through it because I have a Father in heaven who is a great giver."*

According to a legend, some lads were visiting that famous artist, Leonardo da Vinci. One of them knocked over a stack of canvases. This upset the artist because he was working very quietly and sensitively. He became angry, threw his brush, and hurled some harsh words at the hapless little fellow, who ran crying from the studio. The artist was now alone again, and he tried to continue his work. He was trying to paint the face of Jesus, but he couldn't do it. His creativity had stopped. It's hard to hold anger and Jesus into your heart at the same time. Wouldn't it be great if every time the specter of domestic violence or violence of any kind raised its ugly head, we could say, "Into the scene stepped Jesus"?

Evangelist John Wesley was stopped one night by a highwayman who robbed the Methodist leader of all his money. Wesley said to the man, "If the day should come that you desire to leave this evil way and live for God, remember that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.'"

Some years later, Wesley was stopped by a man after a church service. "Do you remember me?" the man asked. "I robbed you one night, and you told me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. I have trusted Christ, and He has changed my life." This reformed highwayman was just one of many persons through the centuries who were headed down the wrong road until Jesus stepped into the scene.

***Here is the answer to all discouragement, all disillusionment, all debasement. LET JESUS... "STEP INTO THE SCENE."***

Clarence Darrow, the great criminal lawyer of another day, had among his friends a young minister. This seems strange, because, as you remember, Darrow was usually thought of as an atheist, infidel, agnostic or what have you.

They were talking one day and Mr. Darrow began to reminisce. He talked of his career and some of the famous trials in which he had been the lawyer for the defense. He said, "This has been an exciting life." He had made at least a comfortable fortune and modestly he guessed he might be regarded somewhat of a success.

Then Mr. Darrow asked, "Would you like to know my favorite Bible verse?" His friend said, "Indeed I would." Mr. Darrow said, "You will find it in Luke 5:5 (our lesson for the day): "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." He added, "In spite of my success that verse seems to sum up the way I feel about life." **Mr. Darrow, for all his accomplishments, still had an emptiness in his life" an emptiness that only Christ can fill.**

These fishermen in our story from Luke's Gospel had toiled all night and had caught nothing. They were weary of mind and body. **Then Jesus stepped into the scene.**

**NOTICE WHAT JESUS TOLD THEM TO DO!!** *He told them to launch out into the deep. He told them to throw their nets on the other side of the boat. WHAT HE WAS REALLY TELLING THEM TO DO WAS TO EXERCISE THEIR FAITH. Faith in him, faith in their own abilities as fishermen, faith in the abundance of the*

seas. It was Peter who spoke up: *"Lord we've toiled all night and have caught nothing, but at your word, we will do it."* Jesus restored their faith, and that was precisely what they needed at that moment in their lives.

**Did you know that many of us need THOSE SAME WORDS from Christ?** Do you know the biggest barrier to success for most people? **It is the fear of launching out. It is the fear of change. It is our unwillingness to take action.**

We are not happy with our lives, we are dissatisfied with our work, we are discouraged and disillusioned. *We feel that life is passing us by and what do we do about it? NOTHING!!!*

**Experts tell us that the majority of people in our land have a built-in resistance to CHANGE** We are afraid to **rock the boat**. Afraid to start that new business we've been dreaming about for years. Afraid to follow that dream of returning to school. Afraid to build that dream house. Afraid to take that trip around the world. Afraid to say, "I love you."

**And Christ STEPS INTO OUR LIVES AND SAYS... "Don't be afraid. I am with you.** Launch out into the deep. **PUT YOUR NETS DOWN!!** That's what the disciples did, and you know what happened. They brought in so many fish they nearly sank their boats. **It would not have happened if they had not exercised their faith.**

There is a story from sailing-ship days about a vessel stranded off the coast of South America" unable to advance because there was no wind. Week after week went by. The sailors were dying of thirst when another schooner drifted close enough to read their frantic signals for help. Back came the answer: **"Let down your buckets!"**

**When they did, they found water fit to drink beneath their keel.** Far from the coast though they were, the fresh water current from the mighty Amazon River surrounded them. **ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS REACH FOR IT.**

**OUR LESSON TODAY SAYS TO US.... CAST OUT YOUR NETS!! LET DOWN YOUR BUCKETS...AND REACH FOR JESUS!!**

. Don't be afraid to exercise your faith. This is still a wonderful, abundant world that God has created for us. Trust Christ's word and launch out into the deep--whatever that means in your life.

**We are not alone. Let Christ step onto the stage of your life.**

**Answer the door to his knock. He will not break down the door, but if we trust him, WE WILL OPEN THE DOOR AND HE WILL GIVE US NEW LIFE!!**

AMEN.