

## Good News from Doctor Luke 6

### The Calling of the Disciples

#### Luke 5:1-11

*Lord, help me to hear your call and be ready to respond. I'm not perfect but I'm ready to have you take charge.*

So there you are, going about your ordinary everyday business, and one day someone comes up to you. You've seen him before, around the place. But, frankly, times are tough; you're busy. Prophets and God-botherers have been coming and going all your life and so far nothing much has changed.

So when he tells you he's going to borrow your boat, well, it's a bit of a nuisance, but you shrug your shoulders and help him to get out into the bay where the crowds can hear (that part of the shoreline is dotted with little bays that form natural amphitheatres). You're minding the boat as it rests at anchor but you can't help listening to what he's saying. He's talking about God becoming King, about everything being different, about a new day dawning in which the poor are going to be helped up out of the mud. Well, if he could change a few things around here he'd be most welcome to try, but frankly we're not holding out much hope. Ah. Now he's finishing. Back to the shore, I guess. He'll be on to another village. Actually, I'm ready for bed. It's been a long night out on the lake and nothing to show for it.

But what's this? He says he wants us to go fishing again! What's that about? Doesn't he know that night time is when the fish gather? Is he crazy or what? But something about the way he says it makes you do it anyway.

And the next thing that you know, it isn't just the fish that are caught...its you! He seems to know something that goes deeper than everything else. He seems to have a purpose, a plan. He wants helpers. Why me? Goodness knows, but actually (I know it sounds a bit stupid) there's something about him I've never seen before. Maybe this is for real. Maybe He is for real. Maybe he thinks I'm for real. That's a scary thought. In fact

(it strikes me), if he's really a prophet, and if he wants me to work with him, my life might have to change. Just a bit..... Don't think I want that.....

But what's that? He's laughing. 'Get up, Peter. You're going to be catching people from now on'. What? You mean me? You can't be serious, Lord. But he is. Very serious. But also very light-touch. Come on, Peter. This is the first day of the rest of your life.

Post Advent, Baptism & Temptation Luke wants immediately to put us in the shoes of the first disciples and hear afresh the call to "push out into deep water" following Jesus. Wrapped in this profound life-changing encounter are some vital principles we need to grasp if we too are to be effective disciples today in 2014.

1. Our Pulpit is our Workplace/Community: for the first disciples it was their boats, for the Christian teacher it's their school, the Christian Doctor it's their hospital or surgery, the Christian Politician it's the City council, the Christian employed in all kinds of ways that's their pulpit and they preach a sermon daily whether they realise it or not. For many of us at St Andrews, the Oasis Café has become our pulpit, for some its Sonbeams, Connections, Kidz Klub, Prospects, Food Bank, HOTS or Street Pastors. Discipleship is 24/7 and where God has placed you for the majority of your time is exactly where your pulpit is.

2. Teaching then the Practical!

Discipleship can never just be about the gathering of knowledge about God, or even experience of God, unless it results in or leads onto practical acts of loving-kindness to draw people into the Kingdom. We need to be doers as well as hearers: such a balance is vital to growth and maturing.

3. Push out into Deep Water/ Let Your Nets down For a Catch!

If I am honest this is one of those bible principles I wish was not there! We love the safety of the harbour (walls of our buildings, fair weather Christians). I don't naturally want to do

such daring things, and how many times do I need to do it Lord? But I have found that this is the measure of the Christian Life of Discipleship and right at the heart of it is the word: TRUST. Deep Water is scary because one never knows how deep it will get (Ezekiel 47). A decision in faith to TRUST & OBEY (for there's no other way) is required.

Letting your nets down for a catch also requires Trust but we either choose to let him lead and be Lord or we don't: it's a black and white as that. But hang on: the great thing about being a disciple of Jesus is that although the call comes to me as an individual, it's with others that I pursue it! Teams of Disciples can work a net together (a net for work colleagues, neighbours, those at the gym, those mums at the school gate, regulars at Oasis Café, etc.), and together believe God for a catch way beyond what we would have thought possible, as individuals.

#### 4. The Difference between Flesh & Spirit: a crucial insight.

Will it be: "Fishing hard all night" or "One more time with Christ"? Will the result be "Caught Nowt!" or "a huge haul of fish?" Sadly many of us fail to access the power and dynamism of Christian living because we don't yield our lives to the Holy Spirit and continue to toil away, well meaningly, in the flesh. Peter's response: If you say so (Obedience), I will (Choice), let down the nets (Direction). So where is the Lord asking you as an individual to let your net down (with others) and where are the places in our shared mission and ministry that are ripe for harvest?

#### 5. More than you ask or even imagine (Ephesians 3:20)!!

"More than" is not the preserve of Royal & Sun Alliance: long before they stole it, it was and remains the clarion call of fruitful Christian Discipleship. When we follow Christ we always get/see/receive more than we bargained for: more fruit/ more miracles of grace/ more blessing, and yes, sometimes, more pain. This story is no exception: the result of the deep water fishing trip was: *Straining Nets past Capacity:*

the Lord always blesses our obedience wonderfully and in a way that we know it's his doing from start to finish. We must expect people to respond to the call of the Gospel of Grace when it is prayed and presented in a winsome Spirit-led way. *Need for Partners:* This was not achieved by an individual but by a group (a congregation even). The fish filled both boats, nearly swamping them: One Bride of Christ, One Body of Christ, One Church (no competition) working in Unity: Street Pastors/ Food Banks /HOTS/ Kidz Klub/ Global Cafe: there the Lord commands His Blessing (Psalm 133).

#### 6. Response to a Move of God

Alpha Male Peter is totally wrecked by what He has seen and experienced: Jesus doing God Stuff and the biggest haul of fish he had even seen. There is never a better moment than this to choose to get right with God: He falls on his knees before Jesus, in awe of God!! He immediately is convicted and correctly describes himself as a sinner who cannot live with Holy God. (Sometimes I wonder whether most of us have never realised how wretched as sinners we were when we came to the Lord and how great the grace and forgiveness He showed us) Totally wrecked he could have stayed in that place becoming a religious hermit but Jesus calls him to a new fishing trip.

#### 7. Response to a Call of God

Initially its fear for Peter and Jesus sees that and says Don't Be Afraid (366 times on scripture: one for every day of the year and one in case there is a leap year). Fear too will keep you in the fake religious clothes of miserable sinner but Jesus doesn't want that to be so and died so it wouldn't. The call to Peter and to you and me: is to Catch People. The Gospel is always people centred rather than religious activity or Church. Church is just an organisational consequence of mission not the reason for it!! Catching people sounds scary but it's the most beautiful thing ever: A dear friend Shelagh who went to be with her Lord in 2010 was caught in 1987 in the East End and she and her husband Terry who became a Christian the next

day, have shaped my life and ministry over these past 27 years. So what did Peter do? He left everything and followed Jesus: partial will not suffice or satisfy; all or nothing is what the Lord calls you and me to.

Deep Water Christians are needed to steward the Streams and Rivers of Grace running in this community and city: the pay's terrible but the fringe benefits are out of this world.

When Christ calls a person, he tells them to come and die, declared Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer did just that and was hanged by the Nazis for resistance to Hitler. Now maybe you are not at this stage yet: perhaps you are at the back of the crowd on the shoreline. You have heard something of what Jesus was saying. You know the fishermen, everyone does, big strong men with hands like shovels. From the shore you watch as Jesus talks to them, you see them shrug their shoulders, put out a little, and let down their nets. You hear them shouting, see a flurry of activity. Then you see big Peter kneeling down in front of Jesus. Is this where you are at? You have heard enough testimonies to know that something's going on. You have seen others suddenly changed: their lives turned around. Maybe you're a bit jealous but at the same time relived that the spotlight hasn't been turned on you. But the spotlight, though it does show things up (Peter's instant reaction was to see himself in the light of God's holiness, and to draw the necessary conclusions), shines in order to show the way to life. Jesus doesn't want to leave anybody out. His call to Peter and the others - that they should now help him in catching people - came precisely in order that the good news would go out wider and wider, reaching as many as possible. Ultimately there are no bystanders in the kingdom of God. We are reading Luke's gospel today because Jesus kept his promise to Peter, despite Peter's initial reluctance and subsequent failures. When Jesus calls, he certainly does demand everything, but only because he has already given

everything himself, and has plans in store, for us and the world, that we would never have dreamed of.

Pastor David

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