

4th Sunday before Lent. 6 February 2022

Jesus Calls His First Disciples. Luke 5:1-11

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Sermon: Calling and Character. Revd David Treharne

How wonderful to have these Scriptural passages about calling on this day of Accession. As her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the country begin celebrating her Platinum Jubilee we are becoming more and more aware of just how important the Queen's Christian faith, sense of calling and dependence on God has been.

Some of you may remember that the Bible Society wrote a wonderful book of tribute entitled 'The Servant Queen' to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday. It documents how Her Majesty has served our nation all her adult life *"with amazing consistency of character, concern for others and clear dependence on Christ."*

The Queen herself said,

I have been – and remain – very grateful to you for your prayers and to God for His steadfast love. I have indeed seen His faithfulness.

Vocation

The Queen certainly sees herself as having been called by the Lord to a particular role and vocation in life. However, calling is not merely reserved for Kings and Queens. Each of us has been called by God too!

All Christians have a universal baptismal calling to know, love and serve the Lord. This is a calling and movement in our lives that draws us into deeper union with Christ. It leads us to an ever increasing desire to love the Lord and love our neighbour. Loving obedient response to this increasing desire brings purpose and fulfilment to our existence.

Alongside the universal calling there can be a specific call to be someone or do something particular. What does the Lord require of YOU (Micah 6:8)?

God calls us by names for particular tasks and purposes for a particular time and place. It might be a deeper life of prayer, pastoral care of some kind, music, arts, leadership, community engagement, friendship, administration, exercising our gifts for the benefit of others... and so much more.

Wherever we find ourselves and whatever we are called to... or indeed end up doing (sometimes it can feel as though we've taken many a wrong turn in life)... wherever we end up we are called to be people of character. We are Christians... Christ's one's... anointed one's little Christ's... people displaying the character of the Christ whose Spirit is within us.

Character

The Bible readings display some of that character we need.

- **People of Honesty (with God).** "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything" (Luke 5:5). Have a conversation with God! Tell him how it is. Honesty is gold dust, and is the first part of conversion.
- **People of obedience.** "Because you say so, I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:5). We are to carry out that which we are tasked to do! Undertake to follow the makers instructions.
Do not merely be hearers of the word... but doers! James 1:22.
- **People of Perseverance.** "We've worked all night" and now you are calling us to have another go. The disciples kept going even though on the face of it it didn't seem like a good or sensible idea. Sometimes giving up seems the right and better option (and sometimes it is), but if God calls us to keep going we should persevere. "Do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4:16).
- **People of Interdependence.** Simon Peter needed the others in the boat as well as Jesus' guidance. It was a joint effort, and he was reliant upon God and co-operated with others. We hear such interdependence with the young Princess Elizabeth... .

I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service... But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do: I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.

Princess Elizabeth, 21 April 1947

When I spoke to you last... I asked you all, whatever your religion, to pray for me on the day of my Coronation - to pray that God would give me wisdom and strength to carry out the promises that I should then be making... I have been uplifted and sustained by the knowledge that your thoughts and prayers were with me.

Her Majesty the Queen, Coronation Day, 2 June 1953

- **People of Humility.** Knowing one's inadequacy, knowing one's need of God, knowing that we do not know it all. Falling on our knees like Simon Peter (Luke 5:8).
- **People of Courage** in the face of fear, trusting in God when we doubt. "Don't be afraid" (Luke 5:10). Have courage to take a risk for God... courage to give it a go. Do you/I have the courage to offer oneself in God's service and say "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8)
- **People with Christ Jesus first** above all. "And they left everything" (Luke 5:11) You shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3). Love the Lord your God with heart, soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27).

Whether we are called to be a leader of people, a parent, carer or friend, doctor, listener, entertainer, intercessor or encourager I think that Queen Elizabeth has shown some of this character and I leave you with some of her words.

"I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God."