

Dear friends,

After his baptism, Jesus called the people to repentance, to turn away from darkness and towards the light. The fishermen's response to Jesus' call is immediate and they follow him. To be ready to follow Jesus we, too, need to repent. The first people to follow – Peter, Andrew, James, and John – did just that. They left their fishing nets and turned toward Jesus. Their former lives were no longer their priority – and the adventure really began! The same can be true for us also if we are willing to re-orientate our lives as followers of Jesus. This is the true meaning of repentance.

Every blessing, Margaret.

Call to worship:

"Follow me," said Jesus, "and I will make you fish for people." – immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Lord, we too,, have left all kinds of things just now to spend some time with you.

Help us to focus solely on you now, and may we receive your blessing. Amen.

Lord, you invite us to turn, to make a new start, and to follow you.

You call us beyond ourselves.

You call us to welcome friends and stranger until the whole world has turned and worships you. Amen

The words to Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult' written by Cecil Frances Alexander [1818-1895] StF 250

1 Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea,
day by day his voice is sounding, saying: 'Christian, follow me.'

2 As of old apostles heard it by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for his dear sake.

3 Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us, saying: 'Christian, love me more.'

4 In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures: 'Christian, love me more than these.'

5 Jesus calls us! By your mercies, Saviour, may we hear your call,
give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all.

Prayer;

Lord of light and salvation, the stronghold of our lives, we are here to worship you.

You shone in the darkness and have given us hope – we walk towards your light today, knowing that your light can never be extinguished.

Lord, we come to you today.

Forgiving God, Father of all, almighty and powerful one, whose kingdom has come near.

We come to sit at your feet today.

Jesus, light of the world, you stepped down into darkness and came and lived among us.

We come to sit at your feet today.

Holy Spirit, you breathe life into our calling – your wisdom and guidance helps us to follow you.

We come to sit at your feet today. Amen.

Forgiving God – we are sorry when we say one thing and do another;
we are sorry when we say yes but then say no;
we are sorry when you call us yet we choose not to follow.

Lord, you have asked us to follow you:
we are sorry when we choose to ignore you;
we are sorry when we choose to do what we want;
we are sorry and respond to your call.

As you called the fishermen to leave their nets and follow you, help us to follow you too – to go in a new direction with you.

Transform us and make us whole – and help us to enjoy the journey with you. Amen.

Loving and merciful God, who has called us to repentance: we are truly forgiven by you.
We are washed clean by your blood and can respond to your call to follow you, knowing we are healed and restored. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 4: 12-23:

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali – to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’

From that time on Jesus began to preach: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers – Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers – James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Comment:

Jesus has moved to Capernaum – but this is much more than a house move for it is the beginning of something which has been long awaited. This is the moment when the kingdom of heaven comes near. Just as the sun rose gloriously over the Sea of Galilee, so a spiritual light was rising among them. Jesus deliberately chose to move to be among poor people, rather than among the rich and powerful in one of the larger towns.

This was a hinge moment in Jesus’ ministry.

Perhaps this should shape how we read the calling of his first disciples. The simplicity of the call – ‘Follow me,’ – and the immediacy of their response can make us look around for a more nuanced story.

Surely, we feel, they must have already come across Jesus elsewhere – surely they did not entirely leave their families in the lurch, and so on. Indeed, having read John's account of the first disciples last week, perhaps we might think that Andres and the others met Jesus and heard him near the Jordan, then returned home to families and work – so that when Jesus came by and called them specifically, they were well ready to go with him.

But perhaps wondering about those why's and wherefores takes us away from the sheer challenge of the 'now' within the story.

Now – is the moment when the ministry begins.

Now – is the moment to recognise that fact, and to take the risk to follow him.

That is what those disciples did – are we ready also?

Meditation of James, son of Zebedee [Nick Fawcett]

We were mending our nets – dull work, perhaps, but a necessary evil, for if they were broken we would catch nothing though we fished all day. Each haul put food on the table and clothes on our backs – yet when Jesus called, we didn't just break off, but left them behind. We discarded our livelihood with barely a backward glance.

Madness, some called it – but it was the best move we ever made, for it wasn't just our nets which were broken, but our lives, our world – and he alone could put things right.

I knew it somehow the moment I met him, his very presence tugging at my heart and touching my soul.

We were overwhelmed, all of us – feeling unworthy to respond yet unable to resist, and as we walked and talked with him in days to come so that sense grew stronger, for he revealed our needs.....yet also answered them. He exposed our faults.....but brought forgiveness and new beginnings, inner healing as undeniable as undeserved.

We have no nets now, but we are fishing nonetheless, this time for people, for we want others to experience what we have found – to taste his joy and share his life – to know that, however broken they may be, his love can make them whole.

A way into Prayer: [from Roots 2017]

Say these words slowly:

'Lord, sometimes I feel that I am just waiting around for your call. I suspect that is because I am not hearing, or perhaps not listening. I know that you call me, and that you want me to use my time well.'

Spend some time reflecting on what it means to be called by God, then say this prayer:

'Lord, I am ready to 'come and see'. Help me to spend each day doing what you would have me do – so that, as you call me to new things, I am ready to follow all over again. Amen.'

Lord, I have to admit that sometimes the way is hard.

I do get discouraged and find it hard to trust.

As the fishermen left their nets, trusted, and followed – help me to do the same. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession.

Jesus went through Galilee teaching.

Lord, we pray today for all who teach, in schools, nurseries, colleges and universities – for those who have letters after their names and for those who have taken their experience from life – for all involved in passing on knowledge to make this world a better place.

Lord, bless them all.

Jesus went through Galilee proclaiming.

Lord, we pray for all who share the gospel. We pray for our ministers and deacons – and we pray for those people in lands where they are persecuted yet who still seek to share your love.
Lord, bless them all.

Jesus went through Galilee healing.

Lord, we pray for doctors and nurses, and the many others who work in our health services behind the scenes.

We pray for those who care for loved ones at home – and we pray for all the staff of residential and nursing homes.

Lord, bless them all. Amen.

The words to ‘Ye holy angels bright’ written by Richard Baxter [1615-1691], John Hampden Gurney [1802-1862] and Robert Chope [1830-1928] Singing the Faith 69

The original hymn was entitled ‘A Psalm of Praise’ and had sixteen verses! The present four verse text is now the accepted version. John Hampden Gurney published a version of the hymn in 1838 and is responsible for the text of verse 3. The other verses retain much from Baxter’s original.

1 Ye holy angels bright who wait at God’s right hand,
or through the realms of light fly at your Lord’s command,
assist our song, or else the theme
too high doth seem for mortal tongue.

2 Ye blessed souls at rest, who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released, behold the Saviour’s face,
his praises sound, as in his light,
with sweet delight ye do abound.

3 Ye saints, who toil below, adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives, and praise him still
through good and ill, who ever lives.

4 My soul, bear thou thy part, triumph in God above,
and with a well-tuned heart sing thou the songs of love.
Let all thy days till life shall end,
whate’er he send, be filled with praise.

Closing Prayer.

Lord, send us out into this coming week as renewed people.
Help us to turn away from what is wrong and turn to what is right.
Help us to turn towards our neighbours and to all who are lost.
Help us to turn away from distractions and towards more adventuring with you.
Help us now and always. Amen.

And may the blessing of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – fill us, and all whom we love, and all for whom we pray this day and throughout all eternity. Amen.