

Dear friends,

Another week passed by and now we are looking at Matthew's Gospel and his telling of how the first disciples followed Jesus. His telling seems different from that of John, but perhaps Andrew and Simon had returned to their home and fishing until Jesus came to them and called them into ministry. We, too, are called at different times and in different ways through our lives so it is important that we are always ready to hear and to follow. We may be becoming 'rather more mature' but God will never ask of us more than we are able to do, so the call may easily change in its specifics as we too change. I wish you all every blessing in the coming week. Margaret

Call to worship:

[based on Isaiah 9: 1-4]

There will be no gloom for the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

There will be no gloom. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined.

There will be no gloom for you have multiplied the nation and you have increased its joy.

There will be no gloom for we rejoice with you as with joy at a harvest.

[based on Matthew 4: 12-23]

Jesus saw two brothers casting a net and said to them: 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.'

Immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus.

Lord, give us the courage to respond to you immediately.

Jesus saw two other brothers in a boat and said to them: 'Follow me!'

Immediately they left their boat and followed Jesus.

Lord, give us the courage to respond to you immediately.

The words to 'Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult' 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 toil and home and kindred, leaving all for thy 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 pleasure: '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, your call to us is 'Will you come and follow me?' Give me courage to respond.

Lord, your call to us is 'Will you come and follow me?' Give me strength to do my best.

Lord, your call to us is 'Will you come and follow me?' Give me the nerve to follow you immediately.

Open our ears to hear your call – our eyes to see you before us – our lips to respond – and open our hearts to your love. Amen.

Lord, you call us to respond as one.

We come from a variety of homes and situations, but we can share with one another in worship.

Lord, you call us to respond now, no matter what kind of week we have had or what situations we have found ourselves facing, be they good or bad, enjoyable or exciting, frustrating or fulfilling. We come to you now in response to your call.

Lord, you call us to respond always – help us to follow you into this new day, this new week.

Lead us in our worship – lead us to exciting new beginnings, so that, in responding to your call, we learn to love you more and to love one another.

Lord, we respond to your call. Amen.

Lord Jesus, when you called those fishermen, they responded immediately.

Forgive us for the excuses we come up with: we are too young or too old – we have too much work already or perhaps too little time – we want to think it over, we'll let you know tomorrow.

Forgive us, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, when you called those fishermen, they left their boats.

Forgive us for the things we cling on to: the reasons that we give for not responding to your call – our home, our job, even our families. We want to hold on to everything rather than be willing to do anything.

Forgive us, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, when you called those fishermen, they became fishers of men and women.

Forgive us for the chances we miss to fish for you – all the people we come across in our lives. Forgive us the lack of courage to risk speaking out for you!

Forgive us, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Lord, your forgiveness enables us to move away from sin to service – your faithfulness enables us to move forwards and not lose heart – your generosity inspires us to move outwards & to invite all. 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 – taken from The Holy Bible – The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language. Copyright 2002 by Eugene Peterson

When Jesus got word that John had been arrested, he returned to Galilee. He moved from his hometown, Nazareth, to the lakeside village Capernaum, nestled at the base of the Zebulun and Naphtali hills. This move completed Isaiah's sermon:

'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, road to the sea, over Jordan, Galilee, crossroads for the nations. People sitting out their lives in the dark saw a huge light; sitting in that dark, dark country of death, they watched the sun come up.'

This Isaiah-propheesied sermon came to life in galilee the moment Jesus started preaching. He picked up where John left off: 'Change your life. God's kingdom is here.'

Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon [later called Peter] and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them: ‘Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.’ They didn’t ask questions but simply dropped their nets and followed.

A short distance down the beach they came upon another pair of brothers, James and John, Zebedee’s sons. These two were sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishnets. Jesus made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father.

**Meditation of James, son of Zebedee – taken from A Most Amazing Man – Year A by Nick Fawcett.
Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett**

We were mending our nets: dull work, perhaps, but a necessary evil, for if they were broken, we’d 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, discarding 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 that 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 – exposed our faults.....but brought forgiveness and new beginnings, inner healing as undeniable as undeserved.

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

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Lord Jesus Christ, we don’t understand everything about you – our knowledge being partial and limited. We haven’t fully comprehended the meaning of discipleship – what it will ask of us – what it will cost.

We struggle to walk your way for we are so easily led astray by temptation.

We fail to give you the place in our lives you deserve, allowing you to be crowded out by more immediate but ultimately irrelevant concerns.

Our faith is weak and our commitment poor – yet we know that in you alone lies the answer to all our needs – you are the way, the truth and the life.

Help us to hear your call and to follow. Amen.

Comment

This passage tells of the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. It follows on from the story of his baptism and time in the desert. Jesus starts to work in Capernaum, in Galilee, away from the district in which John has been arrested, and therefore free from the threat of government interference. Galilee was a district with a mixed population so beginning here indicates that Jesus’ mission will be wider than simply Israel. The verses from Isaiah link the beginning of this ministry with the prophecies in Isaiah 9: 1-2. Again, the wider ministry of the ‘coming king’ to include the Gentiles is present in this account.

We also have the calling of the first disciples. This follows a regular 'biblical call' pattern – appearance, the sight of people at their daily work, call and response. The call from Jesus here is phrased simply: 'Follow me!' and is one to radical discipleship. The leaving of the past and turning to the future is represented as absolute and complete. The story focuses on the calling of individuals and the nature of their response. The choice that is presented is around the question of dominant values. Jesus calls people to put the kingdom, embodied in following Jesus, above family ties – and work for the kingdom, also embodied in following Jesus, above work for pay and family support. This is a radical challenge to assumed teaching of the rabbis. Jesus is actively seeking out individuals to introduce them to the values of the kingdom and to invite them to respond.

Prayer

Jesus went through Galilee teaching. Lord, we pray today for all who teach at schools, nurseries, colleges and universities – for those who have letters after their name and those who have taken their experience from life – for all involved in passing on knowledge to make the world a better place.

Jesus went through Galilee proclaiming. Lord, we pray today for all who share the gospel – for our ministers – for people in lands where they are persecuted yet who still seek to share your love.

Jesus went through Galilee healing. Lord, we pray for doctors and nurses, and the many who work in so many different ways in our health services behind the scenes – for those who care for loved ones at home – for the staff of residential and nursing homes.

Lord bless all of these people. Amen.

Lord God, we give you thanks for our self-confidence – that we are able to value our self-worth – to be comfortable with the achievements of friends and family – thankful to be able to receive constructive criticism when it is needed.

Lord, we give you thanks for the times when we experience wavering self-confidence, the sort that haunts us when we face a big task and feel unable to make a start.

We give you thanks that you constantly show us meaning in life – you give us reasons for hope – you give us somewhere where we can place our trust. You become the centre of our faith.

Lord, we give you thanks that you are with us in the daily situations that we face – you are there as we take each day at a time. You guide our steps to quiet waters.

Lord, we give you thanks that you never stop loving us. We can never be separated from that love, no matter how dark the world may seem – no matter how gloomy we may feel.

Thank you, Lord, that you are able to bring light, love and warmth into our lives. Amen.

Close:

God of light, keep us faithful as bearers of your light.

Help us to focus on you and then outwards to others.

Be with us as we move outwards beyond our comfort zone.

Help us, like the fishermen, to leave behind the familiar and safe and move into your light and freedom and joy. Amen.

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