

New Kilpatrick

Podcast

5th July 2020

Luke 5:1-10

Welcome

Hello and thank you once again for the invitation to travel together for a short time today. I'm Roddy Hamilton, the minister in New Kilpatrick and we have found church in different places recently, which is no bad lesson. Who'd ever imagine you'd be phoning in to worship, or listening to us by podcast on a hillside or in the garden at some point during the week that isn't 10.30 on a Sunday morning.

But here we are, wherever that is. But wherever we are, our paths cross today by the waters edge, a particular waters edge called Galilee along with some fishers who discover the one who crosses their path, leads them off in an entirely different direction.

Perhaps the story of the call of the disciples is one of the first stories we remember, an easy and familiar story. But really, we should know better because it never is as straight forward as that.

Let us worship together.

Gathering

Holy God
Holy and loving God
at waters edge
where things feel fluid
a liminal place
where change happens
may we pause
hold breath
and know a presence
beyond all uncertainty

Holy God
Holy and loving God
when the sand feels full of stories
and footprints invite us to follow
may we stand
in the shadow of the Galilean
and find our place
beside the one
who journeys with us

through all things

Holy God
Holy and Loving God
we centre ourselves
and find ourselves
in you

Reading

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and 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 way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning 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 that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

Background

It's that familiar story of the newest disciples about to set off on their world adventure leaving everything behind in doing so.

Och, well, fishing wasn't the highest of professions. Because there was no where to keep fish fresh, you had to fish at night, everything was then sold in the morning and you'd sleep by day. It's one of the lower professions.

As we read, Simon, not yet known as Peter, was in a partnership with three others. This means they probably weren't freelancers and could fish for their own means. Being in partnership probably mean they operated under a lease, and that lease was most likely from a tax collector. That's how they afforded their boat, nets etc.

So they were in debt and to pay that debt the tax might have been as high as 40% of what they caught each day, and what was left was sold through various agents. The agents would siphon off most of the profits and increase the price of fish so that fish was a meal for the elites.

So when they left all this at the call of Jesus, just dropping everything and walking away wasn't so simple. They were also leaving their social networks, their family, patrons, neighbours and debts. Such an act of stepping away from that responsibility and cultural class was seen to be almost deviant. It would have been traumatic for them and for those they left.

It perhaps casts a different picture of the fishers lives, and makes the comment that they left everything, a lot more dramatic than romantic.

Poem

These are the ones
with calloused hands
skin stripped back
nails broken
voices rough

the un-consecrated ones

they reek of fish
and salt

they talk not of bread broken
but bread lines
loaves sate hunger
not left fractured on a holy table

they speak in the everyday
of gnarled miracles
and know worry
unwashed
with etiquette

but with this man
who smells of
bread and wine
iron and wood
something familiar stirs
in their toughened hearts
and it is enough

Reflection

Over lockdown we've been asked to reflect on our wellbeing, our mental health, our emotions. And rightly so. When we find ourselves in peculiar circumstances, some

behaviour is exaggerated, others are found to be more fragile. It's been a bit of a mirror on ourselves.

It's been a mirror on our communities and national institutions too. Never a bad thing to reflect and consider what we see.

That's not an exercise we save only for pandemics. In fact it is an exercise the Bible invites us to do regularly.

One of the ways it enables us to do that is it tells stories. It invites us into a scene where find ourselves, and we see and feel how the characters responded, and perhaps gain some insight into how we react in the same situation. It is the ancient art of a story.

This one is case in point. We're invited onto the beach. We're there listening to Jesus. We watch him climb into a boat as we stand on the shoreline and push off a little from the edge.

But then the focus changes from being the crowd and we find ourselves as Peter. In my Peter, in my being Peter in this story, I'm intrigued. I'm tired. I'm willing to give Jesus request to go out further and fish, a half-hearted go and I let down my nets. I'm asked to do so.

Normally, however, my experience of fishing would override, but here, there is a mystery in me, I'm daring myself just to see what happens next.

So I'm Peter, and I'm letting the nets down. But, hey! Wait! Somehow they are too full to make sense. There is almost magic in the air. A miracle and Jesus smiles without looking at me as if I'm an easy catch. He knows he piquet my interest. I struggle with a question but he knows he's got me. He knows I'll go with him because exploring the questions feels more sensible than staying a fisher the rest of my days.

And we land, and Jesus turns to me in this story, the story with me in it and says, "Are you coming with me to catch people?"

And as the word yes forms on my lips, I find myself saying "No". I say "No!"

Because really, I'm one of the crowd, who goes home, who had roots and family and responsibilities. I'm not one of the ones who leaves everything because everything is a lot. Not the material but the ties, the certainty, the security.

You see, this story mirrors two part of us: the best of us focusses on Peter, the one with the taste of adventure and takes the chance leaving everything. These are always small in number.

And there is the crowd in us, the part that daily comes out to hear Jesus, listens and quietly changes, but goes home at night.

And I'm kind of disappointed in myself. The story in me, implies I should one of the 12, but I don't feel that when the choice comes.

I take great comfort in Jesus spending a remarkable amount of time with crowds. He invested a huge amount of teaching and storytelling with those who go home at night. The bible's mirror exposes me as the crowd rather than the disciple who gives up everything.

And I hear this story as a call to be left to change my local living, by personal relationships, and those around me, the folk who make a difference to the way we live in community.

You know, I don't know what that really says, but these stories we tell are not all about heroes. In truth, I'm left there on the beach ready to go home and Jesus turns to me, not sad or disappointed but says, "that's okay. I need folk who I can trust to be left behind and still make a difference with the everyday. This lot who are coming with me, these are the ones I need to worry about."

Prayer

Loving God
God of the ordinary heroes
the everyday saints
the routine neighbours of the kingdom
may we
follow you
where we are

May we be the steady ones
tenacious with our faith
drilling deep in our communities
leaving our shoes and bags where they are
and lingering
with the work of the kingdom
here
where we are

May we be steady in grace
generous in love
over a length of time
no 'agency' saints we
but long-term followers
purposefully living
in and as
the body of Christ
where we are

May we hang in there
when the scenery doesn't change,
hang in there
when the next day is the same as the last,
hang in there
when there is no new headline
or miracle each day,
but constantly
speak of love here
live with grace here
win and lose and learn
fail and pass and celebrate
here

Loving God
may we
be steady in prayer
constantly holding
the world
those who lead and decide
those who care and support
those who clean and deliver
those our economy sees as of less worth

May we all
where ever we are
live not for self
but with an eye towards our neighbour
a responsibility towards the network we live in
an ethic where everyone is valuable
everyone is a gift
a follower
a disciple
in the beloved community

Hear us as we say the Lords Prayer

Our father
who is in heaven
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven
give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil

for yours is the kingdom
the power and the glory
for ever
Amen

Benediction

May you find yourself on the way
in the very place you are
may you find the opportunity for grace
among the people you know
May you hear the story of renewal
amid the chat of every day
and may you know the God of life
beside you, within you, whoever you are

And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
the Love of God
and the common life of the holy spirit
be with us all ever more

Announcements

Thank you for letting us accompany you today. Thank you to Hazel and Sheila who shared our time together. We've talked about the stay-putters the ones who come home at night. In this season normally even the stay-putters go on holiday, even for a staycation. If you do, even if it is to the park or beach for a day, send us a postcard, virtual or physical to mail@nkchurch.org.uk. We're asking everyone, not just members of the congregation, but all who listen in to create community and we can read out some of those greetings from each other on the podcast over the next few weeks.

Looking forward to catching up with you next time. Take care, stay safe. Bye!