

# 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – Morning Service

## Jesus calls us

Olwen Meller

### Introduction

The theme for our service today is 'Jesus calls us' and we begin by singing a hymn that was a favourite of mine as a child in my Sunday School days, although I was never really sure what a 'tumult' was.

### StF 250 – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

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| 1) Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult<br>Of our life's wild restless sea,<br>Day by day his voice is sounding,<br>Saying: 'Christian, follow me';      | 4) In our joys and in our sorrows,<br>Days of toil and hours of ease,<br>Still he calls, in cares and pleasures:<br>'Christian, love me more than these'. |
| 2) As of old apostles heard it<br>By the Galilean lake,<br>Turned from home and toil and kindred,<br>Leaving all for his dear sake.                 | 5) Jesus calls us! By your mercies,<br>Saviour, may we hear your call,<br>Give our hearts to your obedience,<br>Serve and love you best of all.           |
| 3) Jesus calls us from the worship<br>Of the vain world's golden store,<br>From each idol that would keep us,<br>Saying: 'Christian, love me more'. |   |

*Cecil Frances Alexander CCL No. 515642*

### Opening Prayers

Creator of the universe, we come before you this morning to worship you. Your handiwork delights us, your care for us nurtures us, your steadfastness upholds us.

Creator of the universe - **We worship you**

Jesus Christ, Son of God, your coming as a man astounds us, your word of life awakens us, your rising from death transforms us,

Jesus Christ, Son of God - **We worship you**

Holy Spirit, Breath of Life, your vitality empowers us, your fire illuminates us, your powerful love unites us,  
Holy Spirit, Breath of Life - **We worship you**

Loving God, as we reflect this morning on those who have listened to your call, followed you faithfully, served you wholeheartedly, and witnessed to your truth, justice and love, we thank you for the prophets who bravely declared your word to hostile and uncaring peoples. We thank you for the disciples who embraced the strange adventure of following Jesus. We thank you for the evangelists who risked their lives to bring the good news of your saving love to all the world. We thank you for Christian people in every age and in every place who have lived out your gospel as shining lights in a dark world and we remember those we have known and loved who have shown us the way. We ask now that you will be with us and bless us as we ponder upon your word Amen

Our first reading is taken from the Book of Isaiah ch 6 verses 1 - 8. This tells of the call of Isaiah. In a vision in the Temple, God reveals himself to Isaiah as the all-holy One. This vision evokes in Isaiah a sense of his own sinfulness, but then, cleansed of his sins, he responds without hesitation to the Divine call.

## Reading: Isaiah 6:1 - 8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'

## StF 663 – I the Lord of sea and sky

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| 1) I, the Lord of sea and sky,<br>I have heard my people cry;<br>All who dwell in dark and sin<br>My hand will save.<br>I, who made the stars of night,<br>I will make their darkness bright.<br>Who will bear my light to them?<br>Whom shall I send? | 2) I, the Lord of snow and rain,<br>I have borne my people's pain;<br>I have wept for love of them<br>They turn away.<br>I will break their hearts of stone,<br>Give them hearts for love alone;<br>I will speak my word to them.<br>Whom shall I send? |
| Ch) <i>Here I am, Lord.<br/>Is it I, Lord?<br/>I have heard You calling in the night.<br/>I will go, Lord,<br/>If You lead me;<br/>I will hold Your people in my heart.</i>  | 3) I, the Lord of wind and flame,<br>I will tend the poor and lame,<br>I will set a feast for them<br>My hand will save.<br>Finest bread I will provide<br>Till their hearts are satisfied;<br>I will give my life to them.<br>Whom shall I send?       |

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The call of Isaiah parallels the call of Peter in the Gospel reading. Here again we see that it is God who takes the initiative and we see how the holiness of Jesus evokes in Peter a sense of his own sinfulness.

## Reading: Luke 5:1 - 11

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' 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.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled to 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.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 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.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

## Reflection 1

Jesus began his ministry in the midst of intense crisis and danger. Soon after Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan, John the Baptist was arrested by Herod Antipas and thrown into prison. Herod was infuriated that John was preaching against his immorality and so Jesus withdrew into the calmer northern areas of the Sea of Galilee because, suddenly, it was not safe to be associated with John.

Arriving in Galilee, Jesus moved from Nazareth to live in Capernaum, which became the central hub for his ministry. Capernaum was also the home of five of the twelve disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, John and Matthew. Capernaum, has in the last hundred years or so, been excavated by archaeologists and the synagogue in which Jesus taught has been discovered and, also, what they believe to have been Peter's house. These were pointed out to us on our visit to the Holy Land in 1999.

In Jesus' day Capernaum was a thriving fishing village, and fishing was a lucrative business. Pork was forbidden by Jewish dietary laws and lamb was reserved for special occasions and festivities. Fish, therefore, was the staple diet throughout Palestine. Fish were caught in the Sea of Galilee, preserved by salting, and marketed throughout Israel. St Peter's fish was one of our meals in a restaurant at the water's edge, when we visited Capernaum.

Peter and Andrew were involved in a successful fishing partnership with James and John and their father Zebedee. We don't know how wealthy they were but their partnership was large enough to own several boats and to employ other labourers. Although they were not rich, they probably made a very good living. In Capernaum Jesus began to teach and to heal, and it was here that he called his first disciples.

On a superficial level the Gospel story seems to be about fishing, but it's not about fishing, it is about call. More precisely the call of Peter and his companions. Fishing was merely the setting in which the call happened. Fishing was an important occupation, but Jesus was calling Peter and his companions to an even more important occupation. He offered them not just new work, but also a cause to which they could devote their lives. The spread of the kingdom of God. It was not a call to a life of ease. On the contrary it was a call to a life of sacrifice. It was a call to the service of others. 'I will make you fishers of men.' At the end of the story we read how the apostles left everything and followed Jesus. The fact that they accepted this challenge so wholeheartedly tells us a lot about the kind of men they were and yet, they were just ordinary people. No-one has ever believed in the ordinary people as much as Jesus did.

What qualities did Jesus see in them that made him call them to share his work? They had the first and most essential one - faith in Jesus. When I was a child and took part in the Scripture examination, and we had to learn this story about Jesus calling the first disciples I always imagined that Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee one day and just 'called' a few random people, who were standing around, to be his disciples. It is only as I've grown older, and perhaps wiser, you might say, that I've come to realise that Jesus actually knew these people. He had lived amongst them for quite a long time before he uttered those famous words 'Follow me'.

We, too, are called to follow Christ. One doesn't have to be an exceptional person to follow Jesus. So what does this mean for the ordinary person? It means to be a Christian where you are and in your chosen profession. We read in 1 Corinthians ch 12 that there are many ways of serving but the same Lord is served. Peter and his companions had their failures. We too will have our failures but we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by our weaknesses or demoralised when we don't get results. What we need is some of that trust in Jesus that Peter had.

Peter and his companions had fished all night and had caught nothing. It is possible to do ones best, and still have nothing to show for it. Jesus could have blamed the apostles but he didn't. He encouraged them by saying 'Try again. Launch out into the deep and let down your nets' and when Jesus said this, Peter's reply was simply 'OK. If you say so'.

Peter had complete trust in Jesus and at his word was prepared to attempt the impossible. We see this later in the Gospel when he attempted to walk on water at the word of Jesus. The Gospel story is not so much about fishing but about trust. We all need someone who accepts us for what we are but believes we are capable of more and challenges us to realise it. The quality of people's lives is affected not so much by what is given to them but by what is asked of them and by their response.

### **StF 673 – Will you come and follow me**

- 1) Will you come and follow Me if I but call  
your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and  
never be the same?  
Will you let My love be shown?  
Will you let My name be known,  
Will you let My life be grown in you and  
you in Me?
- 2) Will you leave yourself behind if I but call  
your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and  
never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
Should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let Me answer prayer in you and  
you in Me?
- 3) Will you let the blinded see if I but call  
your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and  
never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean  
And do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean in you and you in Me?
- 4) Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call  
your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and  
never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
To reshape the world around,  
Through My sight and touch and sound in  
you and you in Me?
- 5) Lord, Your summons echoes true when You  
but call my name,  
Let me turn and follow You and  
never be the same.  
In Your company I'll go  
Where Your love and footsteps show  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in You and  
You in me.

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### **Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1 - 11**

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

## Reflection 2

Isaiah, Paul and Peter are three key figures in the Bible. All three figure prominently in today's Bible readings. All three were specially chosen by God. Yet each one had a deep feeling of unworthiness.

Isaiah declared 'I am a man of unclean lips'. Paul declared 'Of all the apostles I am the least. I don't even deserve to be called an apostle.' And Peter declared 'I am a sinful man.' This was not humility on their part. This was the plain truth. Each of them felt unworthy and from a spiritual point of view this is an advantage. They didn't put themselves forward - they were called by God. They accepted their call reluctantly, convinced that they were completely unworthy.

I think back to the time when I first became a local preacher. Various ministers had suggested over the years that I should do the training but I always felt that it wasn't for me - that I wasn't up to it and then one Sunday morning in our old church when Pauline Cooke, our Minister's wife, was taking the service, the reading was the one we have heard this morning from Isaiah, and it was as I listened to it that I felt the call to preach. I thought 'Yes! This is something that I can do' and as they say 'The rest is history'.

In our world, people who run for public office generally put themselves forward, and aren't slow to advertise their qualifications. We only have to look at the politicians of today. Such people are usually out for their own glory. On the other hand, when we meet someone who is fearful and hesitant in allowing their name to go forward, we find that person to be more believable and more human. Pride, arrogance and cleverness can become a hindrance whereas humility on the other hand is a great starting point, however, it is easy for us to use our weaknesses as a cop-out.

Isaiah asked God to choose someone else - someone with a clean mouth.

Peter asked Christ to leave him alone because he was a sinner.

Paul felt unworthy as he had been one of the main persecutors of Christians.

God didn't choose Isaiah, Peter and Paul because of their sinfulness. God chose them in spite of it. Eventually they accepted the invitation and went on to do great things for God. God chooses people who are conscious of their limitations and who, therefore, rely on Him, rather than on themselves. When we answer God's call he empowers us to do things we never thought possible and so we should ask Him to give us the strength to go out into the world and, as Jesus put it become 'Fishers of Men' and, of course, women.

### StF 566 – Take my life and let it be

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| 1) Take my life, and let it be<br>Consecrated, Lord, to thee;<br>Take my moments and my days,<br>Let them flow in ceaseless praise.  | 4) Take my silver and my gold,<br>Not a mite would I withhold;<br>Take my intellect, and use<br>Every power as thou shalt choose.       |
| 2) Take my hands, and let them move<br>At the impulse of thy love;<br>Take my feet, and let them be<br>Swift and beautiful for thee. | 5) Take my will, and make it thine;<br>It shall be no longer mine;<br>Take my heart - it is thine own;<br>It shall be thy royal throne. |
| 3) Take my voice, and let me sing<br>Always, only, for my King;<br>Take my lips, and let them be<br>Filled with messages from thee.  | 6) Take my love; my Lord, I pour<br>At thy feet its treasure-store;<br>Take myself, and I will be<br>Ever, only, all for thee.          |

## Prayers of Intercession

Isaiah, Peter and Paul are three of the most important people in the Bible. All three had a deep sense of their own unworthiness, yet all three went on to do great things for God. Lord give us the humility to acknowledge our sins, and strength to rise above them, then we will have the joy of discovering that it is when we are weak that we are strong because your power becomes available to us. Let us pray to the Lord who strengthens us in our weakness, and who does not abandon us when we fail.

Let us pray for all those in positions of leadership in the Church that they may draw strength from the courage and generosity of the apostles

L: Lord in your mercy      **R: Hear our prayer**

For those who hold public office that they may fulfil their responsibilities worthily and well

L: Lord in your mercy      **R: Hear our prayer**

For ourselves that we may not be discouraged by our weakness or demoralised by our failures

L: Lord in your mercy      **R: Hear our prayer**

For all those known to us who need our special prayers today [*Silence*]

L: Lord in your mercy      **R: Hear our prayer**

**Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; 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.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 418 – We have a gospel to proclaim

- 1) We have a gospel to proclaim,  
Good news for all throughout the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name:  
We sing his glory, tell his worth.
- 2) Tell of his birth at Bethlehem -  
Not in a royal house or hall,  
But in a stable dark and dim,  
The Word made flesh, a light for all.
- 3) Tell of his death at Calvary:  
Hated by those he came to save,  
In lonely suffering on the cross,  
For all he loved his life he gave.
- 4) Tell of that glorious Easter morn:  
Empty the tomb, for he was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share his victory.
- 5) Tell of his reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified.  
He sends his Spirit on his church  
To live for him, the Lamb who died.
- 6) Now we rejoice to name him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel-message we proclaim:  
We sing his glory, tell his worth.

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## Blessing

May the Lord bless you with a faith that never falters. May you lead others to Christ by the way you live. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and for evermore. Amen.