

**5**Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"<sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>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." <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

"They left everything and followed him." Quite an amazing statement, even more so if it is seen as being the first encounter between Jesus and the fishermen, but it was not. Earlier in Luke's Gospel we find another encounter with Jesus and Simon in the house of Simon's mother-in-law.

Jesus had been in Capernaum for a little while teaching in the synagogue and healing the sick and the locals would have got to know at least a little about him. When he asked the fishermen to put their nets in the water once more they obeyed and had an amazing catch of fish.

What is the reason the author has included this little story? We cannot know the mind of Luke but that does not mean we cannot speculate. It shows that doing things our way can be unproductive but Christ's way is another matter.

It could also help us to see that people encounter Jesus in different places and at different times and it may well be an accumulation of encounters that leads to a person following him in daily living.

It perhaps challenges us to continue to share with people we know about our life with Jesus. Trust is important in relationships and as people get to know us so that they may trust us then they can be challenged – not necessarily by us directly – to consider the importance of faith in their lives having seen its place in ours.

Often what many people need most in life in Britain is friendship and the time of another person. We have recovered from Christmas when many of us struggled to answer what it is that we want for Christmas for we have so much materially. Often what we want is the company of another person and times of Lockdown have shown this to us.

To offer time to another is to offer something precious for it cannot be replaced, once used it is gone. We may replace the book, the CD/DVD, the garden rake, but time is irreplaceable. Time is the ultimate consumable.

I know of many "out and out" Christians; and I have been one. Out on Sunday at Church, a Monday at a Church business meeting, a Tuesday at the prayer meeting, on a Wednesday at Bible Study, Thursday Coffee morning, Friday church cleaning, Saturday fund raising event. All good things but are they building up the Kingdom or just making me feel better (or worse)? Always out but without time for others, without time for friendships and relationships with people outside the Church family.

When we are allowed "out" will you return to what you used to do or could you find a new group to join, to make friends with, to share Jesus with as people grow to know and trust you and see how faith guides your life? Perhaps by casting the net on the other side we might find more fish just waiting to be caught for Christ?