

SERMON – 18/7/21**“Jesus Calls”**

Matthew 4:18-22

“Jesus called them.” (Matthew 4:21)

Every year for the last 30 years or so, Family Week has been a fixture in the calendar of Kinross Parish Church and indeed of the wider community. Many of you are directly involved (or perhaps have been in the past) because it is very much a team effort, but for some it may still be a bit of a mystery. Like so much last year, Family Week was online, and like so much this year it is going to be a little different again – instead of being all together here in the church it will be taking place in five separate bubbles around the town – Swanscare Nursery for the wee ones, in the church here for the P2s and 3s, at the Gospel Hall in Montgomery Street for the P4s and 5s, at St James' Roman Catholic Church in the High Street for the P6s and 7s and at St Paul's Episcopal Church in the Muirs for the seniors. The theme this year is Jungle Adventure and in the midst of the same zany fun, drama, crafts, games there will be the same opportunity as ever for the children and young people to hear the Good News about Jesus and in fact to encounter the Lord for themselves. This year, in order to draw in the whole church family to what is going on I have decided to take the same five Bible passages as we will be focussing on during Family Week for our Sunday sermons over the coming five weeks before and after Family Week itself.

And so today, based on this morning's reading, we will be listening for Jesus' call. For most of us this will be a very familiar Bible passage which we will have heard many times from our earliest years. Nonetheless there are always new things to discover in God's Word and I expect that today will be no different if we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church, so I want to take a few moments this morning to dig in a bit deeper to the call of Simon Peter and Andrew and of James and John and to consider the similarities and differences between the two and between them and us.

Right at the outset let me emphasise the fact that Christ deals with us all as individuals. Although both the accounts here are of Jesus calling brothers and Jesus calling fishermen, you don't have to be a brother or to be a fishermen for Jesus to call you and He doesn't always call people in pairs – we learn that from other call stories in the Gospels. A point that is made if

we fast forward to the end of John's Gospel where the same Peter we read about here asks Jesus about the same John that we read about here: 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus replies, 'What is that to you? You must follow me.' So this is about *you* this morning, not anyone else but *you*. Jesus says, 'Come with me.'

It's a very uncomplicated passage we have read this morning, but still there are a few things we do well to look more deeply into and which are helpful in thinking about how Christ may be calling us.

Firstly, in both cases, we are told that the fishermen respond 'at once'. Now that perhaps presents some of you with a problem because you are not the type of person who would naturally make a big decision spontaneously like the disciples appear to do here. If, as I suggested earlier in the service, the Lord Jesus was to walk in here this morning and call to you, 'Come with me' would you just get up and go? Well, again, if you turn to John's Gospel you discover that at least Andrew had previously been a follower of John the Baptist, the one who had come to prepare the way for the Lord. You see sometimes – often, perhaps – there is a prior journey to take before you are ready to hear Christ's call and maybe that's where you are at the moment – perhaps the way is being prepared today for a call that is still to come. Equally, perhaps you have been in preparation for long enough; perhaps you have been running away for long enough; perhaps you are scraping the bottom of the barrel for excuses. Sometimes, when Jesus says 'Come with me' your response should be 'I'm coming right now'. Maybe for someone here today that time has come – it's now, at once. Jesus says, 'Come with me.'

The second thing to highlight, I think, is that this episode takes place in the midst of these men's working life. Although it is a moment of profound spiritual significance for all of them, it doesn't happen in the course of a synagogue service but at the seashore. Andrew and Simon Peter are actually in the boat on the water in the very process of catching fish and even though it would have been second nature to them they would have been concentrating on what they were doing. This is not a good time, Jesus – can't you see we're busy? James and John are also in their boat, although tied up on shore working on their nets, whether mending them at the close of a night's work or preparing them before setting off to fish, it doesn't much matter which. It's not a good time for them either – either they had tasks to

complete before setting sail or they were tired at the end of their shift and still had work to do before they could go home. Maybe you also hear God calling you at an inconvenient time – you have to concentrate on what you are doing, you've got deadlines to meet, you are tired and you need to get some rest. And still Jesus says, 'Come with me.' It's not always going to be here in church with an open Bible and in an attitude of prayer and worship that God calls. For Simon and Andrew, James and John it was at the seashore in their fishing boats with their nets in their hands, and for you it may well be at your workstation, with a client, when there's a rush on. Jesus says, 'Come with me.'

And thirdly, going with Jesus involved the disciples in leaving something significant behind and we shouldn't glibly underestimate the challenge that that sometimes presents. Simon and Andrew, we're told, left their *nets* – it was probably all they had ever known and although Jesus describes the mission He was calling them to as being about catching people rather than catching fish, maybe not such a different kind of work, they would be under no illusion that what He was asking of them was anything other than a huge change of direction. The same was true for James and John – it was their *boat* that they were called to leave, presumably a fairly valuable piece of property, and as well as that they were being called to leave their *father*. What emotional cost were they being asked to pay in walking away from the family business? Maybe that is why you have never truly heard the call of Christ to you to come with Him, because you have recognised that sometimes going with Jesus means leaving something or someone precious behind and you've not been willing to do that. Is that where *you* are this morning, counting the cost of discipleship? Whatever your circumstances, though, and whatever may be the cost of following Jesus where He is leading you, it is always going to be the better way - in the words of the hymn: "Be still my soul: for Jesus can repay from His own fulness all He takes away." Jesus says, 'Come with me.'

"Jesus called them." And Jesus is calling each and every one of us. We are perhaps apt to use the word 'call' in a Christian context only in relation to recognised ministries. Well, not everyone is being called to ministry, but everyone *is* being called to be a disciple and to make disciples of others, and everyone is being called to come with Jesus, to follow where He is leading through the everyday things of life.

In the context of Family Week, this story allows us to extend the invitation of Jesus to the children and young people of our community to come with Him and to enter a new dimension of life. And maybe that same invitation is what someone here today needs to hear this morning – Jesus is calling you to accept His offer of life in its fulness, a new start, a new direction, new challenges.

But if you have already committed your life to the way of Christ, don't think that is the end of it. Christ keeps calling: 'Come with me.' So keep your ears open and keep in step with the Spirit.

Jesus called them. Jesus calls us. This is about *you* whoever you are, whether on your own or in partnership with others, whether this is an out-of-the blue invitation or whether it is what you have been preparing for all your life, whether it is in the context of service in church or whether it is where you spend the greater part of your time, whether it is the natural next step in a direction you are already travelling or whether it will involve leaving something or someone significant behind.

Jesus is calling: 'Come with me.' Let's go.