

Responding to the call

**A sermon preached by Emma Hodge at St. Michael & All Angels Church, Sandhurst on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen*

The theme for today's service is "Responding to the Call" which is the theme in both our Old Testament reading from Isaiah where Isaiah says "*Here I am Lord Send Me*" and the call that Jesus gives the disciples to leave their fishing and become fishers of men.

Luke's gospel does not put this story at the beginning as we see other Gospels, in Luke's gospel, Jesus and Simon Peter had met, as Jesus had travelled to Simon Peter's home and healed his mother-in-law.

Today's account is later, Simon Peter, and the other disciples were fishermen, they were experienced, they knew how to read the sea, the seasons, the weather, knew that the best fishing was done at night where the fish were more likely to be closer to the surface of the sea of Galilee. Fishing for them was not just a hobby, it was their livelihood if they did not catch fish, it meant that they could not feed their family.

Jesus' background was not fishing, he was a carpenter. He had learnt carpentry from Joseph.

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The reading is set in the morning, after the fishermen had worked all night and not caught anything.

Take a moment and place yourself in their shoes, they had worked all night, and had nothing to show for it. They were tired, possibly a bit worried, despondent, and yet...

They stay and listen to Jesus, allowing him to preach from their boats to the crowd on the shore.

Whatever they felt, they were willing to spend time with Jesus.

Is this true for us, does how we feel affect how we are willing to spend time with Jesus?

Once Jesus had finished teaching, he then gave the fishermen an instruction.

He told them to fish, they had already spent the night fishing without catching anything but then this carpenter / rabbi told these experienced fishermen how to fish,

Simon Peter was understandably perplexed and confused, he was the experienced fisherman with no

Luke 5:1-11

Isaiah 6:1-8

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luck and he tells Jesus this, but then he goes onto say an amazing thing

If you say so, I will do it

He couldn't believe his ears but he didn't question it, he just obeyed.

He had already seen Jesus at work when he was healing his mother in law,

He had just listened to Jesus teaching

Now he was ready to obey. Simon Peter put his faith into action and obeyed Jesus' commands.

What about us, does the same hold true for us? No matter our experience or feelings, if Jesus tells us to do something, do we just do it?

The results of Simon Peter obeying the command resulted in something amazing. A catch of fish that was so huge they could not bring it in on their own, they needed help from other fishermen in other boats and the boats couldn't physically cope with bringing it in, the boats began to sink..... the result left them awestruck

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Simon had called Jesus master before, but this is where he calls him Lord for the first time, he is overcome with being in the presence of the Son of God, not just a man. It is here that he realised that Jesus was divine and not just human.

Simon Peter's reaction to being in Jesus presence is similar to the reaction that Isaiah had in our old testament reading from Isaiah 6:5 where Isaiah seeing his vision said that he also was unworthy and felt woe – a term for extreme grief or sorrow – was upon him and that he was ruined, just by being in the presence of God

Both Simon Peter and Isaiah were overcome in being in the presence of the God.

They were also both very aware of their shortcomings, and their sinful nature.

Simon Peter and Isaiah, two people who lived in different times and places but yet both similar, they both were aware of their shortcomings, and were overcome when they were in the presence of God.

In Simon Peter's case, he had already come to know Jesus the man, but this time he came to see Jesus the Son of God, to see Jesus divinity.

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In Isaiah's case, had the vision of being in a place surrounded by angels and heavenly beings and before the throne of God.

Both Simon Peter and Isaiah were awestruck at their experience of being in the presence of God. They were aware of their own faults and weaknesses and awestruck by being in God's presence.

You may be thinking that being in the presence of God is only for people in the bible such as Isaiah and Simon Peter, but in Celtic Christianity there is the concept of "thin places" where God's presence is felt and these are feels close to earth and this is one example of people being in the presence of God.

You may have had the experience of such places, where God seems to be especially close. Such places can be natural wonders, or places which have a long Christian and often monastic tradition

Have you ever experienced a "thin place" and felt especially close to God?

While the concept of thin places and being awestruck by Gods presence may seem to be a different theme from how people respond to the call, if we allow ourselves to acknowledge our weakness and come before God with

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the willingness to be awestruck by the amazing God, by feeling how close Jesus and God can be to us, then both our hearts and ears are open to him, to his presence and his acts.

Simon Peter and his companions were astonished at the result of Jesus' interaction; they had been fishing all night and had come home with nothing, but after listening to Jesus, and following his commands, they had more fish than they could cope with. The disciples were astonished, and needed Jesus to reassure them with these words ***“Don't be Afraid”*** and then give the fishermen the opportunity to respond to his call. For the disciples, the fishermen at that time, the Sea of Galilee was a thin place where they were close to the divine in God's son Jesus.

Jesus called the fishermen to change their lives, to leave their lives as fishermen and change to catch people instead of fish.

We like the fishermen are also called to follow Jesus, to change our lives and tell others, and Jesus' words “don't be afraid” applies to us, if we are to hear and obey Jesus, even when every instinct and our experience tells us not to, we need to show our faith and put our trust in God to be changed, just as the fishermen changed from catching fish to catching people.

Luke 5:1-11

Isaiah 6:1-8

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Simon Peter and others turned their lives around and where changed from fishermen to becoming fishers of people. They responded to Jesus call.

*In closing I would like to quote John Bell and Graham Maule in a song we will sing later.*

*“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 you love and footsteps show,*

*Thus I’ll move and live and grow in you and you in me”*