

Text: Matthew 4:18-5:1 (NIV)

Sunday 2nd August 2020

Brightons Parish Church

Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's Word.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Boys and girls, if you could receive an invitation from anyone in the world, from any time in history, and go to their birthday party, who would you choose? Would you want to go to the birthday party of someone famous, or someone who changed history, or maybe a family member you didn't get to know? Who would you choose? Who would you want an invitation from? I'll give you 30 seconds to think or talk about that at home. (PAUSE)

If you like, put up in the Live Chat who you picked, because I'm sure there's some interesting ideas.

I wonder, if you got that invitation, would you be excited?

A little nervous? How would you feel? Because when that invitation is put in your hand, you would feel something, and the same is true of the disciples today.

It's likely the disciples knew Jesus before this particular encounter, because John's gospel has an earlier story, but Jesus wasn't quite ready to start his mission at that stage and Matthew doesn't have room to include everything.

So, here comes Jesus, drawing alongside these fishermen at work and **He says to them**, 'Come, follow me...and I will send you out to fish for people.' These words would

change their lives forever and with one sentence, Jesus gives to them an invitation, a calling, into a relationship and into a purpose.

When Jesus says, 'Come, follow me...' he literally meant, 'Come, behind me...' and these fishermen would have known this to be an invitation to become His disciples, to learn His teaching and His way of life. A good teacher, a good rabbi, would expect to have a group of such followers but normally the rabbi would be asked by the would-be disciple. So, Jesus is doing something different here, because it's Jesus who comes calling, and in the giving of that call, 'Come, follow me...come, behind me...' there is an invitation to relationship.

Now, they've already met Jesus, in John's gospel, John the Baptist **told these disciples** that Jesus is 'the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29) and 'is God's Chosen One' (John 1:34). So, what must the disciples have felt when Jesus said to them, 'Come, follow me...'? Excitement? A bit nervous? Every emotion you could possibly imagine? **Here is God's Messiah** calling them into relationship with Him – they are no longer just people in the crowd, they are called to follow, to know Jesus more intimately than others, and in that relationship with Him, in being present to the lamb of God, the Messiah, their lives will change because they will experience the presence of God daily and personally.

This an invitation Jesus keeps extending again and again and again. He extends it even today,...

Jesus extends you this invitation to know Him, to be present with Him every day, and in such a way that it changes your life. **This is the core of Christianity** – that God became a man, He died and rose again, and so now you can know Him, experience Him, for yourself, for He offers this invitation to you and all of humanity. Jesus invites us into relationship, He calls us all to follow Him.

I hope, I pray, you've responded to that invitation, that whatever your age you can say, "I've chosen to follow Jesus, I am His disciple." If you'd like to know more, then check out last week's message or get in contact with me, and **if you'd like ideas** on how to nurture that with children and young people, then check out last month's and this Tuesday's video on YouTube with Parenting For Faith, because some great ideas were shared there.

Jesus called these disciples, as He calls us all, into relationship, but He also called them into a purpose, **for He said**: ‘...I will send you out to fish for people.’ (v19) It’s a purpose He would repeat at the end of **Matthew’s gospel**: ‘...go and make disciples of all nations...’ (Matt. 28:19) On both occasions, Jesus invites them, He calls them, into a purpose and that purpose has been core to the Church for two thousand years. I’m encouraged that in the Church of Scotland we stood by that call in a report which was published nearly twenty years ago. It was called, ‘The Church Without Walls Report’, and in it they said the core calling, the core purpose, **of the church was**: ‘to invite, encourage and enable people to be disciples of Jesus Christ.’ This is a phrase I’ll probably keep coming back to, even in this series, because today we’ve looked at the invitation of Jesus, the invitation to be His disciple.

But part of being a disciple of Jesus is that we are called to go and make disciples of Jesus, and again this was different to how rabbi's operated. Normally, someone would come and ask the rabbi to be their disciple, and if accepted would follow the rabbi and learn from the rabbi. But eventually that disciple would learn everything they needed, their apprenticeship would finish, and then they would become a rabbi and maybe attract their own followers.

Not so with Jesus, **for He says**, 'go and make disciples...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (Matt. 28:19-20) Jesus doesn't graduate His disciples because a disciple of Jesus remains a disciple, yet they to commissioned to invite others into that relationship with Jesus as well.

So, why this difference between Jesus and the other rabbis? Why is it He who calls? Why is do His disciples stay as His followers? Well, it's because of who Jesus is. Just before He reiterated that purpose, **Jesus said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' (Matt. 28:18) Because of His death on the cross, which conquered sin and the grave, and was vindicated by His resurrection, Jesus is shown to be God's Chosen One, the Messiah, God in the flesh. **Jesus then is the Lord** and so disciples are called into allegiance to Him, they are to be committed to Him, not simply His teaching, not even His church, and certainly not our own preferences, for we are to follow Jesus, we are to heed His call, and see it not as a suggestion but as His command: 'go, make disciples...go, fish.' We are called 'to invite...people to be disciples of Jesus Christ'.**

Yet, here's the thing – do we heed that? Will we heed this call of God? You see, it wasn't only the disciples who followed Jesus. We read **today that**, 'Large crowds...followed him.' (v25) But the crowd followed Jesus in a different way. The crowd was amazed by Jesus, they even liked what they heard from Jesus on the whole, many may even have agreed with Jesus. But the nature of their following was different to that of the disciples. The disciples were committed to Jesus; but it was the crowd who would commit Jesus to the cross, it was the crowd who turned on Jesus **and shouted**, 'Crucify him!...Crucify him!' (Matt. 27:22-23)

A disciple has committed themselves to follow Jesus, to heed His call to relationship and to a purpose. **I wonder friends**, is that us? Is that Brightons?...

Is that the Braes Churches? Do we follow Jesus as disciples, or are we following Jesus like the crowd? Jesus extends you His invitation to relationship and to purpose - I pray that each of us accepts that call.

May it be so. Amen.

We close our time together with our final hymn...

HYMN *MP-272 I have decided to follow Jesus*