**Morning Praise @ Home 9th February 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 5:1 – 11

### Reflection from Sue Coyne

### When Jesus asks, do we stick or twist?

1. Henry and Kate were a prosperous couple who, after some years of careful financial management, now lived comfortably and had bought the SUV they had long felt they needed - wonderful for taking their son, with all his sporting equipment (plus the occasional friend), to the matches and competitions happening around the area.

They’d only recently got to know Josh, an engaging young man who was staying in their village at his mother’s house, after having had some time travelling. Then one day Josh, who didn’t have his own transport, asked if he could borrow the SUV so as to get to a speaking event he was involved in.

‘Well .. that would mean putting him on their insurance, and having to shift all their son’s sports clobber, which wasn’t really convenient’ – so, on balance, Henry decided it was wiser to decline.

Yet the Bible passage we’ve just heard gives us a different example to follow. It wasn’t a capacious SUV that Jesus wanted to borrow, but Simon-Peter’s much prized boat. Even though the fisherman would’ve been weary after a night of fishing, Simon pushes it out for the young man and jumps in behind him.

And, because Simon said ‘yes’, although it really wasn’t convenient, the avid crowds received the teaching they were hungry to hear.

You see, Jesus uses what we can offer him

We are left with the question: What have we got that Jesus might like to utilise – what possessions, what contacts?

Are we prepared to release it for the sake of extending God’s Kingdom?

2. Henry was a financial analyst, his wife a beautician. One day, Josh was having a neighbourly coffee with them – he was good company and remarkably well informed from his travels. The conversation moved to the recent downturn in the economy. With his financial hat on, Henry predicted that it wasn’t worth playing the markets at the moment, but just keeping reserves in secure Cash ISAs. But Josh said he’d been looking at a new social housing investment scheme which could potentially yield high returns, supported as it was by the Government. How about Henry put some money that way?

‘Since when were you an expert?’ said Henry, giving Josh a look. ‘I trust you’re not telling me, as a financial analyst, that I don’t know where to place my capital?’ Josh just smiled. As the months passed, Henry’s reserves didn’t demonstrate much growth and occasionally dipped a fraction.

V 4 of Luke’s account tells us that the carpenter suggests that the fisherman cast his nets again. Did Simon retort, like Henry, ‘Since when were you an expert?’ preferring to rely on his own expertise, which told him fish are best caught at night and furthermore there weren’t any shoals in the area at the moment?

No – Simon-Peter’s response was: ‘because you say so, I will let down the nets.’

It probably looked bonkers to his fishing colleagues, yet what a haul Simon caught! What a catch he would have missed if he’d just relied on what he thought he knew, his fishing business just trundling along instead of making Gospel headlines.

You see, Jesus repays our trust in him.

Simon-Peter’s example leaves us with the question: What rewards may we be missing out on because we rely on our own voice more than that of Jesus?

3. Kate was rather more amenable than her husband. After their coffee, she decided to take up Josh’s suggestion. She didn’t have so much to invest, but applied to join the scheme. Within six months, her money had doubled, which she ploughed back into the social housing development, whereupon it doubled again. She hardly knew how to tell Henry how well she’d done, but when, within the year, she was able to open her own salon, it was plain that following Josh’s advice had been incredibly fruitful…

When she finally came clean to her husband, whilst being surprised, Henry wanted to be encouraging of his wife’s enterprise. ‘Well I have to say, my dear, that Josh should feel honoured that you listened to him. That housing scheme is lucky to have you on board – you’ve been remarkably savvy – probably picked up a hint or two from your old man along the way,’ he smiled.

Less self-assured than her husband, Kate is more open to what she hears. Like Simon, she does follow the investment advice she’s given and so nets a tidy profit. Her salon prospers … yet, somehow, the financial miracle is rationalised away. Success is no more than she deserves, she’s been remarkably savvy – her adviser should feel honoured that she listened.

If we have ever secretly thought that Jesus’ church should be grateful that we bring our skills, our diligence and care to its business, then Simon-Peter’s reaction to Jesus is a corrective:

Witnessing the miraculous, unexpected catch of fish, Simon is ‘astonished’ and ‘he falls at Jesus’ knees.’ ‘Who is this amazing man, and how come he should bother with an insignificant rural fisherman like me?’ Simon marvels. What Jesus has done simultaneously demonstrates his holy power and exposes Simon’s small horizons and insufficient life. Simon is humbled, so aware of how his behaviour is less than perfect, his thoughts less than pure: ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’

Simon-Peter knows he has no space for pride, deserves no accolades for the suddenly full boats – it’s all about Jesus, on whom he gazes with awe and trepidation.

We should not be surprised that non-Christians regularly find it hard to recognise their sinfulness in the sight of God. But even Christ’s followers can become blasé about the extent to which God has chosen to overlook our shortcomings, our instinctive impurity.

Yet Jesus is looking for humility, for it is only when we acknowledge that we come with empty hands that we are open to receiving from him; it is only then that he can really use us.

Is it time to examine our hearts: Have we become presumptuous about our relationship with the living God? Do we need to awaken once more to the miracle that, although we don’t deserve it, Christ has chosen us, decided to love us, wants us on his team?

4. Josh had been off around the region during the months of Kate’s maturing investment, but when he returned, he came to see Henry and his wife, enjoying a cuppa from Kate’s new coffee-machine. He was delighted that she’d done so well but now – here was a fresh proposition. In Manchester, where he’d just been, many women and girls were traumatised by their treatment at the hands of grooming gangs and desperately needed encouragement. Would Kate consider closing the salon for a while and taking her skills out to these beleaguered women, helping them believe that they too could be restored and feel beautiful with her products? Perhaps she could also train them in her techniques so that they could earn a living as well as care for others?

What, leave the business she’d so carefully built up? Take all her stock into an environment where it would likely get stolen? ‘Sorry Josh, but that’s way out of my comfort zone. I feel sorry for these women, I really do, but it’s too great a risk. I know that you have helped me get to the point where I’ve got my own salon but – you surely can’t be asking me to leave it all behind. I mean, what do I know about such an area?’

‘Do you still not trust me?’ asked Josh.

‘Well, of course I like you .. but, I’m sorry, it doesn’t make economic sense, and.. and.. I’ve got my family to consider.’

So, sadly, Josh left Henry and Kate to their espressos….

They were quite sensible really, Henry and Kate. I wonder how many of us would have reacted exactly the same. Lovely chap, Josh, interesting ideas, but really, it’s just not feasible to take such risks with one’s assets. …

It’s unfortunate though, that they never saw God move powerfully in their lives…

Or we can take note of the Gospel passage, which illustrates that Christ asks us not to put our faith in where we’re at and what we have, but in him and what he calls us to. ‘Don’t be afraid’ he reassures us - ‘look at how I can transform your life. You can trust me. You and I are going to be working together from now on.’

The biggest catch Simon-Peter had ever landed! He could have responded like Kate: ‘You surely can’t be asking me to leave it all behind? An unbelievable two boats’ full of profit!?’ But what do we read? Simon and his friends ‘pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.’ You see, the amount in the nets was not as significant as what it showed Simon and his friends about Jesus, the source of this blessing.

As with Simon, Jesus has given us a new commission - to be on God’s team and do his work. He’s inviting us into a brave new world, taking who we are and the skills we already have (along with our failures) to transform them into refreshed lives with far bigger horizons. And yes, he understands our anxieties.

Simon-Peter had no idea at the outset about how God would use him, that the example of his life would still be touching us today. But he was willing to give it a go. His positive response to Christ’s invitation challenges us:

- Do we want Christ to transform both the lives within this building and those beyond its walls?

- Do we long to gather as many people into God’s kingdom as there were fish in Simon-Peter’s miraculous catch?

Or would we prefer to be like Henry and Kate, whose polite resistance meant that they never saw God move powerfully in their lives…

What will we choose?

AMEN

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**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Lord, we thank you that you call some of us to be apostles, sent out to do your work.  We pray for all who respond “Here I am Lord” when they hear you call. We pray also for those who have a ministry in their daily lives of work, family life or community, who daily bear witness to the gospel in all that they say or do.

We pray for the world that all its people may find peace, hope and justice; for the people of Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Gaza, Sudan and the Yemen; for global leaders that they may strive earnestly in their endeavours for world peace and the relief of suffering.

We thank you for our world and the places where we live. Help us all to be mindful that we are all created equal in your sight and accept our deep regret that despite this there is still so much inequality to be found. Help us to remember that you want us to be good stewards of your creation, living responsibly in the lands and seas of the earth.

We pray for young people killed by knife crime; as we watch in disbelief as young people turn to violence, we pray for understanding, help and support for all those who feel unsafe or threatened in their communities, for the families of those victims, their friends and teachers, and for the perpetrators.

We pray for our local young people, in particular this week for the pupils of Bishop Wilson School as they come to church for their Parents’ and Carers’ service.

We pray for friends and family who are ill at this time, and remember them in the quietness of our hearts. We bring them to you in the confidence that you love them and know their every need and that your healing power is still the same today. Bless all that is being done for their recovery and answer our prayers as you see best.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**