

Sunday 6th February 2022
4th Sunday before Lent (C)

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: Isaiah 6.1-8
NT: I Corinthians 15.1-11
G: Luke 5.1-11

In our Gospel passage today, we hear the call of Simon- later called Peter, the fisherman. I preached on this event back in November, but from the Gospel of Mark's perspective. My focus was casting and mending, and I talked about the routines of our lives. I remember talking about how each day can feel the same as every other day. Since then, I find that no two days are the same. There are changes to work patterns due to the rising and falling rates of Covid in the city. There is anxiety building over the impending rise in fuel prices. Also, every day on the news and in the media- it feels like there is a fresh revelation about those in leadership who have not acted with integrity. Those people who are in a position of power and make decisions for our country. This can be very disheartening...

Thinking about integrity- two people spring to mind- firstly the Queen and secondly, our very own Bishop Paul. It is a special day today for the Queen as she celebrates 70 years since her Accession to the throne. I have a picture in my mind of the Queen at her husband's funeral- sat alone in St George's Chapel, observing the restrictions in place- doing the right thing.

Bishop Paul is a man of integrity who speaks out for what is right. He is a patron of Open Table- an ecumenical charity for the LGBTQI community and he has also been the patron for Liverpool Pride. We will miss Bishop Paul when he leaves our Diocese next week. He has been a truly wise and inclusive leader for us here in Liverpool.

Having integrity and doing the right thing, were the qualities that Jesus possessed. Along with abundant and extravagant love. In today's passage we hear how before calling Peter, he asks him to cast his net again and Peter obeys. He simply obeys. His catch far exceeds his expectations- the catch fills two boats. What does this tell us? Obedience to Jesus will lead to abundance? An abundance of love and grace, certainly.

Following Jesus' call can be immediate and radical, as it was for Peter and the first disciples. For others, it can be a more gradual process, but the obedience required is the same. My own path of hearing Jesus' call has lasted for years, and I'm still being called, still being obedient.

It is important for us to remember that the call did not stop in the Gospel stories, it is real and happening now. In Luke we hear how Jesus got involved in the everyday concerns of Peter. Peter needed to catch the fish to make a living. Jesus gets involved in the everyday issues in our lives- if we let him. Jesus' involvement in the lives of others provides us with a good role model. Unlike those currently in leadership of this country at the moment, Jesus is a pure and Holy role model for us.

Jesus met with people in their brokenness, in their loneliness and anxiety and changed lives. His radical love and inclusion are qualities we should also aspire to have, in order to bring positive change to people's lives. I'm a Social Worker by profession and one of the earliest definitions of a social worker is someone who is an agent of social change. I believe that is a good definition of Jesus and a definition we can all aim to live out in our daily lives.

Examples of social change and radical love and inclusion could be- how do we respond to the needs of others, are we conscious of our environment? What choices do we make each day that can benefit others, rather than ourselves? Taking our lead from Jesus, we can seek

mercy and act justly. The first disciples of Jesus were not tried and tested, and they faltered at times, just as we falter, but Jesus took them and takes us- just as we are.

Following Jesus is not a path to privilege and success, but rather a path of obedience and doing what is right. Following Jesus is to learn from Him a way of life, a way of thinking, speaking, and acting. Learning from Him in order to be formed by Him. Peter was overwhelmed by the miracle that Jesus performed, and he protested that he was unworthy, because he was a sinful man.

In today's Old Testament reading, Isaiah is in the presence of God, and he has been asked by God to take a message to God's people. Isaiah protests and says, 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips; and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

Both Isaiah and Peter feel the extent of their unworthiness. A seraph cleanses Isaiah's lips and Jesus has a cleansing word for Peter. Whatever troubled both Isaiah and Peter were let go as they were empowered to carry out the work of the kingdom of God. Jesus takes us as we are and makes us new and equips us for mission. Sometimes God calls us to a change in vocation and sometimes he calls us to feed his sheep where we are, in our families, workplaces and communities. Following God's call is not a single event, it is a lifelong journey, filled with peaks and troughs, highs, and lows.

What Jesus is asking of us today, is to be obedient to his call and to do the right thing. Integrity and honesty and humility are qualities that Jesus had an abundance of, and He changed people's lives.

No matter what is going on around us, whatever stories of dishonesty and disingenuity we hear in the news- let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on his Gospel of radical love and

inclusion. Let us live by His standards and share His inclusive and extravagant love with everyone we meet.

Revd Jennifer Brady