



**10th February 2019 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Before Lent**  
**Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Reading: Gospel of St Luke 5:1-11**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

The Gospel depicts a typical working day around the shores of Galilee. The fishermen have hauled their boats up on the beach after working hard all night but caught nothing and still the nets have to be cleaned, how soul-destroying! One thing's for certain you won't find too many fishermen hauling up boats on beaches in St Andrew's! That being the case, what does the Gospel have to say to us today?

First of all, we need to put the gospel into context in order to compare it with our own situation. From the extract we heard it would be very easy to think that Jesus just turned up one day saw some blokes on a beach and thought they'll do, I'll use them to be my disciples. On the contrary, the preceding chapters of the Gospel make it clear that not only had Jesus been out and about in the locality for some time attending the synagogues, preaching and performing miracles, he was sufficiently well known to the fishing fraternity to have been invited to stay at Peter the fisherman's family home. So, when it came to making his selection, Jesus knew all about them: he had chosen each one very carefully. Just as he knows us here at St Andrew's, after all, we worship here in his presence Sunday by Sunday.

Jesus also identified his disciples' failings, of which faults Peter became acutely aware saying "Leave me Lord, for I'm a sinful man". In response, Jesus pours out the wealth of his love and grace encouraging him "Don't be afraid come and follow me and catch people instead." This is incredibly inspiring, as we don't need to be faultless before we can be of use to God. He knows that we sin but he calls us to serve him just as we are. For our part, however, it is important that we recognise our faults and how they have made us what we have become over the course of our lives. Recognition, of who we are enables God to transform us into the one he calls to serve him.

God can do so much with people who admit their failings and are active in seeking to change for the better. Thank goodness that serving God does not require academic brilliance, material wealth, legislation, votes, culture, colour or class it just needs heartfelt willingness to serve. God calls everyone equally and equips us individually with different gifts of the Holy Spirit: this is great news! No one has the monopoly on spiritual gifts, only together can we achieve the whole. Similar to every worshipping community in this deanery, we all start from the same baseline.

We don't have beaches in St Andrew's but that needn't stop us from thinking creatively about our discipleship and how we reach out to those beyond our church afloat in the secular parish. By now you might be thinking, we've worshipped here for years and times have changed. There's much competing for families' attention these days, how on earth are we to grow the church when the 'fish' are swimming in

several directions at once? Even so, Jesus still calls us to trust him and set out into the deep throwing our nets overboard to catch fish, which may be different to the ones we use to haul in before.

Over the past few weeks in the conversations I've had with many of you, it has become clear to me that all, whatever our age, all are willing to help grow the church. Your observations have been inspiring and ideas innovative that could be converted into positive action. For instance, some have said when we've identified what we would like to achieve, why not visit other churches that already do similar, learn from them, and then work out how we might adapt this for our own church. But, before that, you are telling me, effectively, that we need to work out what our nets look like, where they are stored and who holds the key to the locker. In other words, who does what, when and how? That's why, as I mentioned in the welcome to this service, it is so important to compile the schedule of all that we undertake to enable the life of our church. With the Holy Spirit's guidance if we can identify our strengths and weaknesses and pool our experience of all that helps this church run as a base for mission-outreach the better we can plan. By sharing tasks, as we are able, means no one need be burdened. If we all know where we stand then we won't be fishing in the dark any more. Together, our shared experience can keep our church boat afloat and forge ahead.

Serving God today seldom requires us to leave every material thing behind to follow Christ. We can flourish where we are planted. It was different for those first disciples, as, before Jesus, there was no Christianity, so they needed to keep physical company with him to learn a new way of faith. We have the advantage of being able to learn from their example and so build on that heritage through prayerful engagement with God. Prayer is fundamental for spiritual and church growth.

So, are we ready to go fishing?

Amen.