

**Sunday Morning Worship**  
**Readings, Reflection & Prayers for 9<sup>th</sup> February**



**Isaiah 6.1-8**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: '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!'

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'

This is the word of the Lord

## **1 Corinthians 15.1-11**

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

This is the word of the Lord.

## **Luke 5.1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## **Prayers**

I love this account in Luke's Gospel about the calling of the first disciples. Why? Because I think it contains real encouragement for us today.

Let's place ourselves at the scene for a moment. The first surprise is that Simon (or Peter as he was later called by Jesus) is prepared to do as Jesus tells him and put out to sea again after an unsuccessful night's fishing. Simon, a fisherman by trade, knows that catching fish during the day is much more unlikely than at night, but is nevertheless prepared to follow the instructions of a carpenter and go out again.

We might well ask why, and the obvious conclusion is that Simon and his fellow fishermen have seen and heard enough in Jesus' teaching and healing to attract them, to compel them to 'give it a whirl', so to speak, and see if there is anything in what he says. That's quite likely – earlier in this gospel we have heard that Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law. Simon was already impressed enough with Jesus to call him Master and Jesus must have seen something in him to single him out. In other words, there is mutual recognition of something special about the other.

The nets fill with fish to breaking point and Simon falls at Jesus' feet. He knows himself to be unworthy in the face of this miracle, this unimaginable grace from God. And that sentiment is echoed in our other readings; from Isaiah, who also recognises his unworthiness to respond to God's call. And in Paul's words to the people of Corinth, where he says; "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

We see a common thread in these readings of people called to follow God. And if we look at the experience of many of the great saints – not just Isaiah, Peter and Paul, but think of Abraham, Job, Joshua for example, we see they all have an insight into their own shortcomings but recognise the boundless nature of God's grace and support.

And for me, it is an enormous encouragement to us to have these 'imperfect' role models.

A few years ago, I had an encounter with a woman in a churchyard who wouldn't step into the church (even though she wanted to) because of things she had done in her past. She felt ashamed and unworthy, to the extent of not even being able to pop in and sit for a while. I hope I convinced her otherwise because she was missing the point. The point being the grace of God to forgive, and the blessed relief that we don't have to pretend to be something we are not. God knows us through and through. Jesus knows Simon Peter will fail him from time to time – think of the cock crowing after Peter's denial. But he also knows that Simon's belief and trust in God will give him the strength to serve Him well.

The message for us: we are called as we are, not as we would like to be! A bit like looking at a photo of yourself – never quite what you hope for but actually, usually a true reflection!

Jesus tells Simon: "from now on you will be catching people" - catching in the sense of restoring them to life, this new life offered through Jesus. Simon, James and John embrace this vision. They were so convinced by it that they left everything to follow him.

Again, we might ask why. Perhaps because they recognised that this miracle of a full net of fish was Jesus meeting them in their world, providing for them. The miracle was tailored to their situation, and showed how their lives could be turned round.

And that is what Jesus does for each of us if we will but trust him.

Simon trusted Jesus, a man with no experience of fishing. He risked the ridicule and complaints of his fellow fishermen because of what we might call instinct – that to go out again was the right thing to do.

And we may ask ourselves, where are we in this story? Are we at the stage of acting like Simon Peter, knowing we have to respond to Christ despite the uncertainty that brings with it? Or are we at the back of the crowd on the shore, watching, not quite sure what to make of it all, seeing Simon kneeling before Jesus? Perhaps a bit jealous of his

friendship with this man, or perhaps relieved not to have been singled out ourselves?

In this account, we are told that the fishermen caught so many fish their nets were beginning to break. A prophetic action – there are now over two billion Christians worldwide from all races and backgrounds.

And perhaps prophetic in another way. Sometimes we too come under strain, like the nets. We face the challenge of being Christian in a largely secular society and that can be uncomfortable in all manner of ways. We are all aware of the scrutiny the CofE is rightly under, especially regarding safeguarding. And locally we face the challenge of addressing the building needs we have, (not least keeping tiles on the roof!) so that we may keep this church open and welcoming, a haven for anyone and everyone. And the challenge of trying to meet the community needs we see around us with the limited resources we have.

Our nets come under strain from time to time.

But let us follow the example of Simon Peter who found the courage to put his trust in God to provide. And God did provide – a full net of fish, and friends to help him bring it safely home.

We have so much to be thankful for; each other, so much willing help given to make this church family what it is, and so many opportunities to be an active, loving part of this community. We are truly blessed. Let's never forget this as we end with one of the Collects we use as we prepare for Lent:

*Almighty God, by whose grace alone we are accepted and called to your service: strengthen us by your Holy Spirit and make us worthy of our calling. Amen*

## **Prayers**

God calls his people and commissions them so Let us pray together in the presence of our God.

To the bidding "Here I am, Lord:"

Please respond **"ready for your service!"**

We pray for all who have been called to be workers in God's harvest, searching for the lost and loving them into the kingdom We pray for those who teach God's love, both by word and by the way they live.

Here I am, Lord: **ready for your service!**

We pray for those in authority and in positions of power, that under their leadership there may be mutual respect, integrity and justice. We pray for discernment to see where injustice needs righting and when we need to speak out.

Here I am, Lord: **ready for your service!**

We pray for families suffering poverty or financial difficulties, for families full of tension and disagreement, and for families coping with grief or separation. We pray for the extended families represented here.

We pray for better awareness of how our behaviour affects others.

Here I am, Lord: **ready for your service!**

We pray for those who have been working all night and all who work long hours in poor conditions. We pray for those who have no work and feel rejected. We pray for any resisting whatever service God is calling them into.

Here I am, Lord: **ready for your service!**

We pray for all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit and we pray for all medical staff, carers and volunteers who help them. Especially from our own congregation we pray for Faie Rose, Rosie Goddard, Graham Lyle, Christine Dunne, Bill Jones, Leon and Valda Bailey, Ken and Joyce Pringle, Ann Hunt, Anuwat Wanggane, Alan Coe, Ann and Jack Tubby,

Gloria, Roger Jones, Patricia Ash, Ryan Day, Brenda Hulland, David New, Sue Wright, Meriel Orton, Adrina and Alan Price.

Here I am, Lord: **ready for your service!**

We pray for those who have died and those who grieve for the loss of their company. We ask for the opportunity to prepare for death by the way we live from now on. We remember with love and gratitude those whose anniversary falls at this time: Michael Thompson, Dorothy Morgan, Ian Crocker, Michael Orton, Greta Lawrie, Grant Chandler, Barbara Deakin, Dennis Cook, Jessie Hulme, Ivor Gething, Ted Jackson, Richard Davies, David Glover, Beth Shipsey, Iris Owens & Raymond Pritchard.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

We thank you for the way you show us ourselves and still accept us with love.

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