

The Called Life

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[0 : 00] How are we all? Nice and dry. Must be new wine starting. It's just starting to rain. Must be Christian festival time. If your phone rings when you leave church and you've got this message, how would you respond?

How would you respond? Would you answer straight away? Hi Jesus, great to hear from you. I'm here now. I'm ready to do whatever you're asking.

Or, oh, surely this can't be for me. It must be for somebody else. Or, maybe let it go to messaging, see what he wants first, and then I'll reply.

Or, sadly, just ignore the call. Like many of us, I know a thing or two about God's call on each and every one of our lives, because we are all called.

Vocation is a word that sadly became linked with ordination. That's not true. Vocation, nothing could be further from the truth, because we are all called into relationship with Jesus in our calling.

[1 : 31] And the word vocation comes from the Latin word, which actually means calling. And so, for the Christian, a vocation is not just something that God calls us to do.

It is also the person God calls us to be. That's what he's calling us into. Every baptized Christian shares in this universal call to holiness and to be like and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, clearly, this call of God on our lives isn't an exclusive thing for just a few people. It is for each and every one of us and how we respond.

And maybe you recall a time in your life when you sensed that call or have sensed that call again and again and again in different areas of your life and on your life.

Times may be when we were younger. Times may be when we were towards middle ages. Time now, as I move rapidly towards the new adventure. Times may be when we were younger.

[3 : 01] In your life? People telling you, maybe giving you words, Bible verses, nudging you, maybe reading something, Bible verses. Did you respond willingly?

Or did you put it on hold? Was that call for you life-changing and life-giving? And what difference did that call make to you and those around you?

How did you quantify that call that God gave you? Did your pulse race with zeal and passion when you heard that? Yes, Lord, this is it. I am off.

Or was it more like submission? In many cases, we become very humble with God's call. You know, why me?

Why me? I think probably that was my response. Why me, Lord? Why me? And suddenly you get that response back, don't you? Well, why not you?

[4 : 02] Why not you? Because I know what you're capable of. Because I'll empower you, encourage you, enthuse you to do with what I'm asking. You know, maybe we can understand more fully how these disciples that we've heard about in Scripture this morning, how they responded.

Because here they were, maybe just doing their everyday job to step, being called to step out of the boat into an adventure that they were being offered.

Holy, trusting in Jesus, not knowing what the future has in common. And yet for our calling, so often, we want it laid out in parchment, don't we?

This is what it's going to look like. This is what it's going to be. This is how it's going to work. No, they didn't know. These young fishermen on this day, Jesus has just come from being tempted in the desert, 40 days in the wilderness.

He is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He is fired and fuelled for mission in the power that he is experiencing. He knows what this power-filled point in the world is, what is going to happen, and he starts gathering people.

[5 : 20] And he gathers people, and there is Simon, Andrew, James, and John doing what they do in the everyday, fishing, when Jesus comes and changes the direction of their everyday life.

He calls them into a new purpose. Come and follow me. Do people know our calling?

Do people know that calling on our lives, people around us? Do they know that we've received that call to follow Jesus? And what does that look like?

Have we told them, have we told the people we know and meet every day, that moment in our life where we dropped our net, whatever that may look like, to follow Jesus, to drop our security and follow him?

There was so much security wrapped up in what they did, in their roles and in their jobs. Often it may mean having to leave something in dropping our net in order to follow Jesus, whatever that might look like.

[6 : 31] As the hymn writer says, sometimes it means leaving all I once held dear, built my life upon, all this world reveres in wars to own. All I once thought gain, I have counted lost, spent and worthless now compared to this.

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing. There is something powerful when that call comes. Come follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people.

And if you notice the scripture, it didn't say, oh hang on a minute, I will think about this for a few weeks, we will ponder, I will talk about it in my home group, I will get some wisdom, I will do it.

Immediately, straight away, they dropped their net and followed him. What was in their mind at that point? You know, I guess that thing must be, here I am, I'm an ordinary fisherman.

What, me? You want me, Jesus? To follow you? Me? You know, maybe, what did they sense?

[7 : 40] But why did you call me to this thing that you're asking me to do, Jesus? Well, why not? Follow me. Because I've chosen you, I want you. These rough and ready fishermen knew how to fish.

They knew in all winds and weathers, they'd been out there. They were not the top academics of the day. Be encouraged. Be encouraged.

They were not the cream of the rabbinic society. Be encouraged. But what they were, is they were a committed part of the family business.

They were hardworking. They were loyal. They were responsive. They knew their God. Most raised in a Jewish household. They were salt of the earth.

Literally. Jesus called them with a purpose in mind. As he calls each and every one of us. Have you asked him what that purpose is in your life recently?

[8 : 40] has that been your daily prayer lord i know you've called me but what's my purpose would you show me would you show me lord would you make it really really clear what are you asking me of me jesus has he revealed that to you and if so and he shows you are you ready to respond to that call or as some people refer to it as the nudge of god and sometimes it is quite a significant nudge i can tell you for those of us who know that and many of us will in many parts of our lives i guess there is no greater call in life than jesus to say come come and follow me let's go on an adventure together have you heard that call are you hearing it now and if you haven't are you listening and are you open to it the savior's call that steps out of the old life into the new adventure and for many it is a new adventure trust me with your life rely on me know my purposes for you take up your cross accept the sacrifice and there will be sacrifices because that's what following me brings and with the joy of all that experience that will not only transform your life here in an eternity but will transform those around you if you choose when we look in the bible we talk about the story of jonah i love the story of jonah jonah is there and just park the whale for a little while could we just park the whale and just rewind a bit before because there's jonah and he talks to all his people and he's in a certain community and he gives them messages and he gives them lots of messages and he's happy to do that he's hearing from god all the time and then god says oh by the way i've got a job for you oh yes lord whatever it is i want you to go to nineveh now nineveh in the time is the most godless city you could ever think of these people had no qualms at all of what they did how they did it and so jonah says no where do we draw the line with god nineveh is where i draw the line said noah sorry jonah and you see this thing with then jonah tries to run but i don't know there's a thing maybe that you've found in your life it's that old quote you can run but you can't hide you can run but you can't hide from the lord if he's got a specific job for you to do or a role and so he takes him and strangely enough as we get back to the whale this stinking smelling prophet of god sees a whole community come to know god and he's still not happy you know sometimes god will ask us to

do things that are way way way out of our comfort zone so where do you or where have you drawn the line with Jesus where have you drawn the line in that calling and said no no way I'm not going to do that I can't do that and allowed God to actually encourage you and persuade you empower you enthuse you and excite you into actually His purposes for that calling on your life maybe ask I've often found really when you get that call for a specific thing we sort of barter with Jesus don't we really Jesus have you thought of somebody else if you haven't I can give you a few names of people because you know I've got a pretty good idea really you know that they're far more qualified than I am to do this you know they've been around far more why don't you try them give them a call they dropped their nets I suppose the basic question this morning is what's your net that you would drop if he asked you today what would be a net that you would struggle to drop if he asked you today to follow him maybe it would be security maybe it would be money maybe it would be significance maybe it might be status maybe it'd be a fear of looking foolish the first disciples and the followers didn't have a clue what each day would bring with Jesus they stepped out they dropped their nets and they went what Jesus was about to do in them and through them yet they stepped into a deeper relationship with Jesus to experience the adventure are you up for that and to some it may seem foolishness scripture doesn't record the act the reaction of the fishermen's families I wonder what that was you're going to do what you're going to leave the family business to go and follow this itinerant preacher you what for many of our families who where we have experienced that call on our life we may have received that we may have heard that but when the Lord's call is that clear I've put here maybe the fishermen's families um probably isn't in the bible because it probably wasn't unprintable but yeah like us these fishermen saw the attraction in becoming a follower of a Jesus and they followed an apprentice ready to roll up their sleeves ready to listen ready to learn ready to proclaim ready to teach ready to support ready to encourage ready to empower ready to heal in the power of the Holy Spirit to be carriers of His message to see others becoming followers and disciples there is no greater thing to make Him known in their generation to show the love of God so many committed followers I meet are those who have had to leave something behind in order to fulfill the greatness and the richness the sacrifice in order to follow Him and maybe already you know the cost many of you will have known the cost of what that is what the cost is of doing that and doing that and bless you if you have yet you will also know with that the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in that calling to enable you to do what He has asked you to do to encourage and fulfill that calling and no one is excluded from this call nets are different for each and every one of us I'm going to end with a personal story and it is a very very personal story when this white bit of plastic came out of the blue and we felt that nudge Mandy and I knew we had to sell our house as part of our call to ordain ministry it wasn't financial but it was painful in our in our own eyes at the time nothing short of financial suicide that's how it felt that house was our everything it was hard-earned it was our security our investment for our children's future it was packed with memories yet Jesus asked those first disciples to drop their nets and because we know that when the going gets tough times there will be a temptation to go back to return to the old safe ways that we knew look in the scriptures the disciples did it for a short while I didn't know why Jesus had asked us to make this huge move to sell our house but I knew that it was part of the deal and it seemed like total foolishness in human terms it's but it wasn't in God's economy 18 months later in my curacy I'd hit a bit of a disillusioned patch with the diocese's choice of a training incumbent and I was on a training day in Wales and I'd gone to have my lunch in the cathedral whereupon stood next to me was a person who I had known extremely well in a previous career that I'm not allowed to mention here and he was stood beside me in the queue and I said um oh hello how are you what are you doing here he said oh I'm just passing through I said you're not you're not just passing through I said if I didn't know you better you're here to bump me for a job aren't you he said I am you shouldn't leave your phone on we know where to find you all the time and he offered me a job he offered me a job to leave what I was doing to return to what I had done before in a different capacity with an extremely nice package to go with it it says in scripture that the devil chooses an opportune time to come and tempt you and it'll always be at your lowest point sometimes we have to drop our nets in order not to go back but to keep going forward with Jesus because if that day I'd had the house I hope it wouldn't have been a different story but I dropped my net and there was no going back just want to ask you this morning as we think about that you realize that there is something you have to drop today in order to fully follow Jesus maybe there is a tug of the old world on you maybe that is doubt fear cynicism financial security what others may

think of you whatever that is ask the lord to give you strength to follow that call past issues may be with the church church politics or the national church holding on to past tradition i can't i can't move from here lord maybe ask him what net do you want me to drop in order to fully follow you follow me and i will show you how to serve i will show you that call on your life i will show you life in all its fullness you see jesus doesn't just call the qualified he qualifies the called open your heart and your life trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding it's all part of dropping the net where is he calling you into life in all its fullness if you had this message today what would your response be as jesus was walking by the sea of galilee he saw two brothers simon called peter and his brother andrew they were casting a net into the lake for they were fishermen come follow me jesus said and i will make you fishers of men at once they left their nets and they followed him i'm going to end with a prayer an ancient prayer from ignatius maybe you'd like to pray this with me this morning take lord and receive all my liberty my memory my understanding in my entire will all i have and call my own for you have given all to me to you lord i return it everything is yours do with it what you will give me only your love in your grace for that is enough for me amen amen the