

# Head Out For The Deep Water – Rev'd Christine Barren - Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010

A Play Based on Luke 5:1 – 11

**Narrator:**

There are people absolutely everywhere! Such crowds! I can't imagine that anyone can hear Jesus at all. (*Pauses for a second, looking in to the distance.*) Oh that's a good idea – there's an empty fishing boat on the sand. The two fishermen are mending their nets. Jesus has borrowed their boat and he's talking to the people a little off shore so they can hear him.

*Pause.*

**Member of the crowd:**

Jesus is the most amazing man - all that he said made sense to me and I am just a farmer's wife living nearby. Neither my husband or I are that important.

**Jesus** (*Walking over to the two fishermen.*)

"Have you caught anything? No? Well, why don't you push the boats out much deeper, into the centre of the lake, and try again?"

**Simon:**

We haven't even caught a sardine – not a thing. But I guess there is nothing to lose. Come on Andrew – we may as well try what the master suggests.

**Narrator:**

So the two fishermen pushed out to the centre of the lake, their nets ready to throw over the side.

**Andrew:**

Is it my imagination, or are the nets already feeling heavy.....

**Simon:**

No – the boat is actually tipping – the nets must be full already. Quickly – we need to put the second net over the other side.

*They move quickly to throw the second net.*

**Andrew:**

You know we should have brought the second boat out – but it hardly seemed worth it.

*He turns to the others on shore, shouting loudly*

Quick! Bring out another boat we have hundreds of fish!

**Narrator:**

With the others helping them, Simon and Andrew got all the fish into the boats and safely back to land. The men were all confused and a little scared at what had happened.

**Simon:**

Master – I don't understand what has happened - I don't feel that I deserve such a gift! You should just leave us be – we are simple fishermen.

**Jesus: (turning to the two men and their friends)**

“Don't worry that you don't know exactly what happened. You trusted me and the fish were there, just where you threw your nets. Now I am going to ask you to trust me again. I want you to leave your nets and your boats and come with me. I've a really special job for you to do now. I want you to help me tell people everywhere about the amazing things that God can do for them; how much God loves them.

**Narrator:**

The friends looked at each other in amazement. Why would he ask them to do something so strange, so different? Jesus noticed the expressions on their faces.

**Jesus:**

Don't look so worried. What I am asking of you is not so strange. You are fishermen - all of you know how to fish. All I am asking is that now you will “fish” for people. Come with me. I need you all.

**Narrator:**

And so without a word, they got up and went with him – following him away from the lake to places yet unknown. They had no idea what was ahead. All they knew was that this man Jesus could be trusted.

**Simon:**

Can you believe we are doing this? People back in the village will think we are mad.....

**Andrew:**

Mad? Perhaps. (*pauses*) It feels so right.....

*They all walk on - disappearing out of sight.*

**Woman in the crowd:**

What an amazing day. Imagine those fishermen just getting up, leaving everything and following Jesus! *Pauses wistfully for a moment.....*

I would have liked to go too but that's not for me. People like me can't do things like that can they?

This story is such a familiar one that there is a danger that we will not really hear what is unfolding before us. We have heard that Jesus, having been rejected by those in his hometown synagogue, has set forth on the journey that God requires of him. This journey will appear to end on a hill outside Jerusalem. However we know that there is more to the story, but I am getting ahead of myself. All that is to come.

Today he has started to share the good news of God's love, of God's forgiveness. He speaks to any who choose to listen. We are told, by Luke, that there are crowds of people - so many, that Jesus decides to get into a boat pushed out a little into the lake, so that he can be seen and heard.

We can only imagine who might have been there - no doubt there were many like my farmer's wife, ordinary people who had heard about an amazing itinerant preacher. We are not told what happens to them as Jesus finishes his teaching. Instead the action turns to a couple of the fishermen who made their living on the lake. They have come in from a night's fishing, having caught nothing!

Can you imagine them listening to Jesus as they mend their nets? I wonder what they think of the good news, given their experience on the lake overnight? Good news? Perhaps that sort of thing is only for others yet they find themselves listening as they work. Still when Jesus asks if he may borrow one of their boats they are happy to oblige. As he finishes, he turns to Simon, one of the fishermen and suggests they should put out again - into deeper waters this time.

I wonder why they go. After all they know the lake and have caught nothing. Perhaps it is to be polite or just to humour this man who offers them some tangible thanks for the use of the boat?

We don't know the answer but we do know that what happens then is miraculous. Suddenly there are so many fish that the boat nearly sinks. Although excited by what has happened we can sense that they are probably also a little fearful. This sort of thing just does not happen to ordinary fishermen!

Simon, who we will know in the future as Simon Peter, seems to sense this mystery much more than the others and we hear him protesting that he does not deserve such a gift. "I am a sinful man," he says.

However Jesus' reply needs to be heard. He does not say "Don't worry, God forgives you your sins". Instead he says "Do not be afraid". He seems to know that Simon's words, that on the surface were understandable, are in fact hiding something more.

What Jesus knows is that Simon is scared of the mystery that is before him. Jesus' reply seems extraordinary on the surface. "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people..."

I wonder how you and I would respond to such a statement? How might I "catch" people; how might each one of us respond to such a challenge? We know that Simon simply got up and went! And not just Simon, but a whole group of the fishermen with whom he worked left their

nets and followed Jesus. The story is one that seems to belong to “other people”. I have a feeling that many of us probably feel a bit like the farmer’s wife - “People like me can’t do things like that!”

I wonder if we often miss the simplicity of what happened so many years ago. The fishermen were sitting quietly working and as they worked they heard what Jesus had to say. They had not gone to any special gathering, no “revival meeting”. They were simply going about their work and yet it was to them that Jesus spoke. It was them he called to come with him.

Through history there have been many who have responded to Jesus’ call after “Damascus Road experiences”. However I would hazard a guess that there have been many more who have quietly had their lives transformed by Jesus as they simply went about their daily work.

How many of us feel called to explore our discipleship further but think that it requires some extraordinary change. For some it will be, as it was with the disciples. However for many it may be far less dramatic. Less dramatic, but still crucial if the good news is to be given to those who have not experienced it. Like the farmer’s wife, we most probably have responsibilities that cannot be simply left like those nets.

Responsibilities or not, we can each be Jesus’ hands, his feet, his heart, as we go about our daily lives. The ways we do this may seem insignificant, but they truly do have the power to transform the lives of others. As we approach the beginning of Lent perhaps this is the time to listen again to the voice of Jesus calling us, as he called the disciples.

What is being asked of us and how might we respond?

I do not know what the answers might be for each one of you but I am sure the questions need to be asked. I have no doubt that the answers will be there even if, as it was for Simon, it is a little bit scary. It may require us to push out into deeper water. Yet we know that it was here that there were more fish than they could have ever imagined.

This Lent there will be personal challenges for each one of us and we need to take time to listen to our own hearts. It is also a time when we need to listen as a community together. Perhaps we will be required to sail out a little deeper than we would want; perhaps we will be taken out of our comfort zone. We need to be open to the multitude of experiences that will come our way.

However when we hear Jesus calling us to take a risk and let the nets down into deeper water I have no doubt that like the disciples we will be richly rewarded. Don’t let us be like the farmer’s wife and simply go home!

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