

Sermon for Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022 'Can we emulate our Queen & Governor to dig deep?' from Fr. Mike

Isaiah 6. 1-8[9-13]; Psalm 138; I Corinthians 15.1-11; **Luke 5. 1-11**

The significance of this moment in our history is as follows:

THE 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY of ACCESSION (1952-2022)

The world in 2022 is still not automatically a fair place. Not everyone has a positive or easy starting point in life. The location and to some extent the family of our birth often affects our opportunities in life, which (for the most part) determines our eventual place in Society.

Against this unequal backdrop, our nation traditionally turns to the 'Accession Service' in the Book of Common Prayer, giving thanks that on this very day (in 1952) God '*wast pleased to set thy servant our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth upon the throne of this realm.*' From this moment in history, our Queen also became 'Governor' of the Church of England.

**Head, Governor, Sovereign**

The specific language used here is both significant and crucial. The '**Head**' of the Christian Church remains **Jesus Christ**. Elizabeth is the current incumbent/caretaker who **governs** by virtue of her birthright and calling as Queen; furthermore reigning over our nation in her capacity as **Sovereign Lady (monarch)**. The same collect prayer asks for God's wisdom to be her guide in both her calling as Sovereign and her commissioning as Governor. Assuming each nuance of her unique role is strengthened by '*righteousness*' the petition continues that she will '*always possess the hearts of her people*' as a natural consequence of this combined commission and calling.

This story from Luke is not so much a calling story as a commissioning story. We see that this is a call to a deeper communion and intimacy with Jesus. *This is reflected in our service.* We communion together with each other and God. But deeper and lasting Communion often happens elsewhere...

**Peter had already been a part of listening to Jesus.** This is where his relationship with Jesus becomes deeper and more real. Jesus slowly leads us into deeper communion and deeper obedience with him. — *He asks.* Presumably to see if he is willing. *Then commands* two things: Go out deeper. Let down the nets.

We see Peter's reluctance, yet, in spite of his incredulity he utters small decisions of belief: "Master...BUT at your word." Which is to say, "It doesn't make sense to me. I'm a master fisherman and you are a teacher. We live in different worlds. I have been working all night with other master fishermen and there don't seem to be any fish in the water. However,

based upon what I have seen you do in Capernaum (healing my mother-in-law) I will take this small step in simply letting down the nets. You're not asking me to jump into the water. You're not asking me to row to the other side. Just to go a little deeper."

How many of us have been hovering around the obedience we know Jesus is calling us into? How many of us, don't want to let that one thing go? We find control or safety in having that thing in our grasp. Like a favourite fuzzy stuffed animal, we are afraid to let go. We're afraid to step forward, albeit a small step, because we don't know what will happen. What will happen if we take that meal over to our neighbour? Will they think we're weird? What will happen if we knock on that door.

Jesus is pursuing you. He has been continually in your boat. He has been with you, and although at times may have *appeared* to be asleep, he *has* been with you, tapping you on the shoulder, telling you to let go of your nets and to trust him with that worry, that fear, that unbelief.

### **Deeper communion begins with Deeper Confession.**

Peter knew that there was something this miracle worker Jesus was offering and teaching. He knew there was a need for him to stick around. And yet, it's not until he says, "Depart from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord" that he experiences the sweetness of communion with Jesus.

When we encounter the holy God, like Isaiah and Ezekiel and Peter, we are confronted with our sinfulness.

When was the last time you dived deeply into the depths of your heart, saw the rebellion and simply confessed, unprompted?

It is cleansing and beautiful to confess. That's why we do it each week. Mired from our sin, we practice confessing together to acknowledge that we are not spiritually where we need to be. Indeed, we regularly rebel against God.

Have you had the joy of experiencing your pain? Like Peter clinging to the robe of Jesus. Pushing him away but pulling him back.

Yet Jesus does not depart, he puts us in a place where we *cannot* flee from him. He gently leads us into deeper and deeper communion with him. As we learn more of him, we trust him more. How though?

One very practical way: Spend time observing Jesus. Look at the way he responds in these stories to his enemies, to suffering, to seekers. Slow down, pause a while and ponder.

### **Deeper Confession Comes at the End of Ourselves**

Just so this isn't lost on us, please notice the following:

(1) They were cleaning their nets. They had dirty and empty nets. (2) They had done what was familiar to do, and it wasn't working. They had finished. They had come to the end of their day. They had come to the end of themselves.

### **Deeper Communion Comes in the Commissioning**

Remember my earlier remarks that this is a commissioning scene more than a calling scene? *Jesus points us to a greater purpose.* We can get awfully bogged down with paying the bills - or not! (Vv.10-11) - leaving everything that is known and becoming an apprentice on the way. Actively learning from Jesus. Letting go of control and certainty so the epiphany waiting in the spiritual harbour can break through to educate and empower.

**Peter was called to forsake probably the high point of his fishing career!**

Following Jesus looks at a huge catch of fish, probably the most they caught in their career...then looking at the life Jesus offers...and saying, "Following him is even better than all of this." Forsaking ALL.

Elizabeth II is thankfully someone still worthy of our respect and love who faithfully strives to 'do the right thing' in all matters. Her long service to Church and State has been consistently sacrificial – placing 'Church and Nation' always before 'self-interest' – for over 70 years. Even in her recent personal bereavement, in full public view, she discharged her duty as chief mourner during the funeral of her beloved husband at Westminster Abbey, enjoying no special privileges, sitting in isolation. Like many of her subjects throughout this pandemic, she was allowed no family members around her at this crucial and emotional time. The prevailing rules set by the government, together with public health protocols required this sacrifice, we were told, to keep the population safe and prevent the spread of Covid. It is typical of our Queen and Governor that she chose not to abuse her privileged position (she could so easily have made herself an exception) deciding instead to obey the same rules enforced upon all her subjects. A humbling and abiding example to us all of the true price and obligation for those who hold a moral and/or legal commission. Each must live in a way that displays secular integrity and spiritual righteousness (which our current Prime Minister and other key public figures might do well to note!).

We too, as followers of Christ, are equally commissioned in all matters of faith and life to dig deep. Forsaking ALL.

*Fr. Mike – On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen's Accession, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022*