

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera QLD

9<sup>th</sup> February 2025 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

**Luke 5:1-11**

**CASTING OUT IN FAITH**

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be living your daily life and then to get a call from God to follow and serve Him, and to share His love with others? If you haven't ever thought about it, have a think about it now. I guess it could happen in two ways; we could either place ourselves back in Bible times as part of the stories we read about, or, if you don't want to give up the conveniences of modern day living, imagine Jesus walking among us now and one day coming up to you and saying, 'hey, come and follow me?' Ever wondered what that would be like? How do you think you would respond?

This is of course the scenario in our Gospel reading for today. Simon Peter and others were cleaning their nets after a night's fishing, when Jesus came along and borrowed their boat so He could speak to the crowds more easily. After that, Jesus told them to take the boat out into the deeper water, where they wouldn't normally catch any fish, and to cast their nets out again. I always wonder about that bit, just how a fisherman would take being given orders by a stranger. There are other accounts of God calling people as they go about their daily lives and work; Moses was called while he was looking after his father-in-law's sheep to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Gideon was called while hiding away and threshing grain to be the general to help the Israelites defeat their enemies. Mary had an angel come to her house one day to tell her she would be the mother of God's Son. And there are many more. How do you think you would go if you received a call like this, to cast out and do something different, go into the deep, perhaps do something beyond your comfort zone?

You may well have caught on to where I am leading you here; we all of course do receive these calls, to follow, to serve, to share God's love, in our lives every day. We are called to be disciples in God's kingdom, to step out in following Him, just as much as the disciples in this

account, and all those others we read about in the Bible. And like them, God calls us where we are in our daily lives. What was Simon Peter's response to the call? "We have worked hard all night long and have not caught a thing. But if you tell me to, I will let the nets down." (v. 5) Jesus was calling him to do something which he knew from previous experience wasn't a good idea. But he did it, and the result was a catch of fish so great that it tore their nets and then threatened to sink the two boats which tried to load the catch on board. In Luke's version of this account Peter and the others have already heard Jesus' teaching as He preached to the crowd from their boat, so that message probably helped to transform them into people who heard and followed Jesus' words. But still, in casting out in faith, they took a risk.

How do we go as we hear God's call to us? The call to follow Him. The call to worship Him. The call to live our lives showing and sharing His love. The call to help others to come to know Him and all He offers to them also. Are we, like Peter and the others, always willing and ready to be casting out in faith?

When I was growing up my uncle had a shack at a little place called Kellidie Bay, which is a very sheltered bay located between Port Lincoln and Coffin Bay at the bottom of the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. We had a lot of extended family get togethers there, at occasions like Christmas. When we were there my Papa would get his 10-foot tinny, put a long rope on it, and anchor it to the shore so that my brothers, cousins and I could happily and safely row out to the end of the rope, still in shallow water, and fish, swim, and have fun without the risk of going out into the deep water where we might get in trouble. That rope minimised the risk, kept us in comfort zone, and kept our parents and grandparents much happier and at ease with what was happening with us as well.

To have a rope to keep children safe in a boat and minimise risk is a good thing, and we'd probably question the wisdom of adults if they didn't do that. But as we think about Jesus calling the disciples to go out into the deeper water to cast out their nets, we can also think, 'what ropes are holding us back from going out there?' Unlike the disciples in this case, there are times when

we are called by God to serve Him in some way, and we say no; we allow ourselves to be held back by the rope which is firmly anchored to the shore. As individuals, as a group, as a congregation, as a wider Church, what are the ropes which we find it sometimes hard to cut or let go of so we can cast our nets out in the deeper water as God calls us to do, the things which stop us following and trusting Him? It might be our uncertainty about how things will turn out; do I want to make that commitment; I might feel God calling me to that role but I'm not fully sure I can do it. It might be our hurt; God I went out deep and cast my net out before like you called me to, and I got hurt, I'm not keen to go through that again. It might be that there are things about ourselves, or our group, or our congregation, that we don't want to change, we like them as we are, I'm comfortable, and so there must be a way to get that catch without moving out of my and our comfort zone. It might be the habits and preferences we don't want to the change. The commitment of time and finances we don't think we can give. And, sometimes a big one, we want to stay in control; God I don't know what Peter was doing following the advice of someone who wasn't a fisherman, and I'm pleased it worked out well, but staying here and doing it like we always have works very well for us, thank you. Please work through where we are instead.

To follow God's call, to be His disciples, means to go out and cast our nets. It can mean being willing to forgive and move on in a society which focuses on revenge and festering resentment. It can mean serving God as we serve and help others, outside the church just as much as inside it. It's about using what God has given us to share His love, and to let others know about His love. It's about, like so many examples in the Bible and that we see around us, living as God's people each day, and showing in the lives we live, the way we treat people, what God and His love means to us.

To go out into the deep means to take a risk as we follow God's call to be His disciples. But it's a risk we take with faith and trust in God, knowing His promises, knowing His love and forgiveness for us in Jesus, knowing that even when we feel we are doing things we're not overly comfortable with, floating on the deep water, He is still there, still holding us with the rope we

can't see which keeps us safe. To pick up on our theme for this year, when do follow God's call in our lives, in both the big and the small things, we allow Him to be awesome in the ordinary things of our lives; the smile we give someone, the small hurt we move on from, the help we give that we quickly forget about, the little reference or comment about what God's love means to us in our lives, in these small and ordinary things God works in the lives of others in ways which are as awesome as the catch of fish Simon Peter and the others struggled to bring in. When we do cast out in faith, there is no limit to what God is able to do in and through us.

Casting out in faith. Being willing to let go of the things, the ropes, which hold us back from following God. It's the call we all have as believers, as disciples. Consider what it means for you. Consider how God is calling you as His disciple, every day, and if there are times when you struggle with this call and what God is asking of you. Know always that we follow this call with Him and in His love, and with His forgiveness for the times when we may respond with, 'really God, I don't think I'm going to do that'. God give us the hope and the trust to be casting out in faith so that we can fully know and experience what it is to live in His love, and help others to know it also. Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

- Do you have any childhood memories of things adults did to keep you safe while still being able to explore and experience life? Are you able to convert them to an illustration of how we are sometimes unwilling to let go of our safety and step out in following God?
- What does it mean to you to be a disciple of Jesus? What calls does He give you in your life? Think about all the ways you do worship and follow Him, and serve others, in your life each day.
- What parts of God's call do you struggle with; Using the material things you've been given in His service, letting go of hurts and forgiving, giving witness to your faith, being comfortable with stepping out and doing new things in your life or in the church for the sake of reaching out to others? Any others? Remember that we are all called and gifted differently, but still think honestly if there are calls you are ignoring because you are uncomfortable with them, and ask for God's help in fully following Him.

Pray: thank God for gifting us as disciples in His kingdom, and for calling us to worship and serve Him and to share His love with others. Ask for forgiveness when we fail to take up this call, and God's strength to both hear and follow Him.

*Pastor Andrew R. Koehler*  
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