

**Sunday Update**  
**24<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**Mark 1:14-20**

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!' 16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' 18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

I grew up beside the River Clyde in Lanarkshire, when it is still quite a small river. People would come from miles around the fish the river for trout or grayling. As teenagers, a friend and I decided to take up fishing in the river, so we bought the equipment and went down to the river to catch fish. David caught fish; I didn't catch anything! He took up the hobby in a big way while I gave up. Fishing was once the biggest participation sport in the UK, though it is now not so popular. I wonder if this is the picture in Jesus' mind when He talks about fishing, someone standing or sitting on the bank of the river, rod in hand, trying to land the big fish that is hiding in the shallows. Then, of course, when you catch it and put it back, it becomes twice the size when you tell the story!! Is that was Jesus means when He talks about "fishing"?

It could, of course, be a quite different picture. We have watched *Trawlermen* on TV, these men who work on the deep-sea boats, going out for days at a time trying to catch tons of fish in their very large nets, so that we have fish to put on our plates. Here are men who put their lives at risk every time they go to work, so that we have food to eat. This is a very different picture of "fishing" than our first picture. This kind of fishing has become a political football in the past few months, part of the Brexit negotiations and deal, arguing over who catches the fish that is to be found in the waters around our coasts. Is this the picture in Jesus' mind when He talks about fishing?

The most likely idea in Jesus' mind is the one that He would see around Him every time He walked through the town of Capernaum. Capernaum was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the town in which it seems Jesus had made His home base for a time. It was a fishing town, as was the neighbouring town of Bethsaida, the home of Peter and Andrew, James and John. There would be boats out on the water every day; there were boats pulled up on the shore at the end of a day's (or night's fishing) with the fishermen mending their nets. These would be a sort of throw-net, with weights all round it and a rope tied to the centre. The net would be thrown from the boat, the edges would sink, closing the net around the catch, then it would be pulled it and the catch landed in the boat.

This is the picture in Jesus' mind when He says to Simon and Andrew, *"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (1:17) There are two parts to this call: the first if to follow Jesus and we considered something of what that meant last week in the story of Philip, so today we'll concentrate on the second part. What does Jesus mean when He says He will make Peter and Andrew, James and John "fishers of men", or "to catch men and women instead of perch and bass" as The Message version of the Bible puts it? Jesus takes the picture with which these men would be very familiar and uses it to help them understand what following Jesus would involve. *"At once, they left their nets and followed Him."* (1:18) Then a few yards further on, James and John also said "yes" to Jesus and joined the growing band of disciples whom Jesus had called.

Let me take you to Jerusalem. It is three or four years after this momentous day at the Sea of Galilee when these four fishermen said “yes” to Jesus. These same Peter and John are in the Temple in Jerusalem and they were telling people about Jesus. You can read the story in Acts chapters 3 and 4. There was a beggar sitting at the gate and he was healed in Jesus’ name. Chapter 4, verses 2-4 tells us that “*the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection of the dead... many who heard the message believed and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*” (Acts 4:2-4) The authorities tried to stop them, but they couldn’t; not even a night in the cells made them think twice about telling others about Jesus. “*we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*” (Acts 4:20) It was in their blood; their whole being was inspired to tell people about Jesus and they spent their lives working on this task. For some of them, it cost them their lives. This is “fishing for men”!

Jesus is for sharing. God has a mission to bring grace and salvation to the world, and He invites the church and calls us to take part in that mission. We do that by telling other people the stories of Jesus. Peter and John described themselves as “witnesses”, telling us what they had seen and heard. Our calling is also to be witnesses, sharing with people we know the stories that we have heard and the important truths that we have learned. Now that is an idea that tends to send most of us running for the hills, but we’re not talking about people standing on street corners preaching sermons; for most of us, this is simply about telling the stories of Jesus, or telling our story of faith and church, whenever we have the opportunity to tell it. Over a coffee at home or in the café; over the garden fence with your neighbour who wonders why you love church so much; to your children or grand-children as a story at bed-time; to your mates at the gym, or at the water-cooler in the office (when or if that ever happens again!) – we have opportunities as part of natural conversations to share Jesus with other people. Their interest might be aroused enough to want to know more and that might be the first step for them on the journey to faith. Look for these opportunities; be courageous enough to take them!

A church set up for mission – that’s the challenge facing every church in Scotland. I wonder what we will decide to do when we come out of lockdown. We have a whole list of activities that we’ve been involved in before; how many of them will we want to start up again and how many of them will we decide have come to the end of their useful life? A church set up for mission – that’s what we need to be, set up to tell the stories of Jesus to others and to share with others what is important to our about our faith. “Fishing for people” is not just a hobby for the Church (like the person sitting on the bank, rod in hand!); “fishing for people”, or mission, or evangelism, is the church’s life’s work, at the centre of who we are and of everything we do. Jesus is for sharing. God has a mission to bring grace and salvation to Juniper Green and Baberton Mains and he calls us to take part in that mission with Him. We do that when we tell others the stories of Jesus. This is “fishing for men and women”. It is a great enterprise to be invited to take part in!

*Prayer: Father, we thank You for the good things You have given to us in Jesus, for Your grace, loving us when we don’t deserve to be loved, saving us from our sins, giving us a hope of heaven, promising to forgive us and to be with us always. Thank You that these good gifts are ours in Jesus. Thanks that Jesus is for sharing; help us to see the opportunities for sharing His stories with other people; give us the courage to take these opportunities; help us to be a church set up for mission.*

*Day by day, dear Lord of you  
Three things I pray:  
To see you more clearly,  
To love you more dearly,*

*To follow you more nearly,  
Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people who are searching for something deeper in life, whether they would describe that as faith, or God. Open their hearts to Jesus; let the Spirit lead and guide them to find Jesus and find the grace that He gives.
- For us, for the church, to live by “Jesus is for sharing”. Forgive us when we have kept Jesus for ourselves, or when fear has made us pass up opportunities for telling someone what we believe. Make us a church set up for mission; help us decide which activities lead us in that direction.
- For people who have contracted Covid and are in hospital, that they make a good recovery; those NHS staff who are caring for them, under pressure by the numbers of people in hospital and trying to manage the care they provide.
- For people who mourn because a loved one has died; help them to find comfort and peace.
- For the roll-out of the vaccine to be efficient and effective, reaching the people who need it most; for the vaccine to make people safe, as promised.
- For people who are isolated again by lockdown, spending time on their own again and feeling lonely; for people in care homes, again cut off from family and friends, and the staff who care for them.
- For schools: pupils at home and some in schools; for families trying to manage their children and helping them to take part in learning however it is delivered; for teachers working in new ways and finding that very demanding.
- For businesses that are shut: the pubs and hotels, hairdressers, and others; for those who own these businesses and it is their livelihood; for those who work and are again on furlough; for the gaps left in the social interaction of many people, adding to their sense of isolation.
- For Churches, with buildings again closed; help them to care for all of their people; may the technology be a lifeline for lots of people; help churches across Scotland to be a light in their community and share the light of Jesus with others.
- For people we know...
- This week, take time to think about these words and pray them into your own heart: *“God alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I shall not be shaken.” (Psalm 62:6)*

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love. (Some of the links look a bit different this week, but they should all work as usual!)

Come people of the risen King	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j07fbl3uY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j07fbl3uY</a>
So amazing God	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIVeudCxqSw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIVeudCxqSw</a>
Lord Jesus Christ	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA_g98O42Q4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA_g98O42Q4</a>
Guide me O Thou great Jehovah	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg</a>
We have heard a joyful sound	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6y-THR1AHY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6y-THR1AHY</a>

Remember the prayer e-mail line at [prayerigpc@gmail.com](mailto:prayerigpc@gmail.com)

#### **Some other resources:**

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – [www.jgpc.org.uk](http://www.jgpc.org.uk)

- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

**DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS** - New issues of “**Every Day with Jesus**” Booklet for January and February 2021 are now available. The Editor is Micha Jazz, Director of Resources of Waverley Abbey, who continue to publish the booklet, and Micha Jazz is now producing the daily notes from God’s Word for your life and relationships, replacing insight from the late Selwyn Hughes. .Please contact Ian Aitken who will be delighted to arrange copies. Other Bible Study materials are also available with Michael Merriman. **Let the Bible feed you.**

### **Heriot-Watt University Chaplaincy Annual Public Lecture**

**MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2021 at 7.30 pm**

Online event - Free

**Professor Alister McGrath** will be delivering the lecture on the topic “**SCIENCE, FAITH & THE MEANING OF LIFE: Comparing Richard Dawkins and Albert Einstein.**” **Professor McGrath** is the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion and Director of the [Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion at the University of Oxford](#), and the lecture will be based on his current unpublished research. We are delighted that he has agreed to join us as part of our bi-centenary celebrations marking the founding of Heriot-Watt’s predecessor institution, the world’s first Mechanics Institute.

There will be an opportunity to submit questions via the TEAMS chat function on the night (chat won’t be public).

**Please register via Eventbrite for access details.**

Best wishes

Alistair

Rev Dr Alistair P. Donald

Heriot-Watt University Chaplain

E: [chaplaincy@hw.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@hw.ac.uk)

## Do something different

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

### Prepare yourself...

Loving Lord,  
thank you that you meet us where we are,  
in the middle and muddle of our daily  
tasks.

Help us to hear your call,  
to recognise your voice,  
and to respond to your invitation  
to be with you now.

**Amen.**



### Praise together...

[Everybody's welcome](#) by Vineyard  
Kids UK

### Question...

How do you feel when plans change?  
Is it easier or more difficult if there's a  
sudden change?

### Challenge...

**Yes or No:** Ask a volunteer a series of  
questions that would normally have a yes  
or no answer. The rules are that they can't  
say yes or no, if they do they are out.



### Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Mark 1:14-20. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage. Or you could try acting out the story.

## Talk together...



- Does anything surprise you in the story?
- Why do you think the fishermen were so willing to leave everything behind to follow Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said “fish for people”?
- Are there any skills the men used to catch fish that they might need to use to “catch people”? For example, patience or gentleness.
- How do you feel about the idea that you are chosen by Jesus?
- What might make you hesitate to follow Jesus?
- What makes you want to follow him?
- Jesus spoke to the men during their daily routine, where in our daily routine could Jesus be speaking to you? What might he say?

## Play together...

### Simon says

Play a game of Simon says. Can you include some actions linked to today’s story? E.g. fishing, following, calling.

### Musical bumps

Play a game of musical bumps. Sometimes we have to respond quickly, and if you hesitate, you lose! Today we saw how the disciples followed Jesus straight away. What do you think might have happened if they had hesitated?

## Do something...

Following Jesus isn’t always easy, what are some things that make it difficult? Create a maze for someone else in your house, either draw one on paper, build one out of lego, or create a trail round a room, your house or the garden for someone to try and get through.

Jesus promises that he will always be with us and that the prize of reaching heaven is worth going through the challenges we might face along the way. Perhaps you want to have a prize at the end of your maze!

## Pray together...

**Fish prayers:** You’ll need strips of paper or card at least 10cm long and 2cm wide, scissors, pens or pencils.

Cut a slit about 2.5cm from each end of the strip, on opposite sides of the paper. Write your name on one side then bend the strip and fit the slits together, making a fish shape.

Hold your fish and say this prayer together:  
**Jesus, we want to respond when we hear you call our names.**

**We want to live our lives with you.**

**We want you to be with us.**

**Amen.**

Then you can throw your fish into the air and watch as it spins to the ground.

