

2021-07-25 ... 6.30pm Evening Prayer ... Revd Sam Johnson
Jeremiah 26: 1-15; Mark 1. 14-20

What are the skills needed to get a job?

Googling, this came up: Resilience, commercial awareness, good communication, effective leadership and management, planning and research skills, adaptability, teamwork and interpersonal skills, relevant work experience, relevant qualifications, problem solving, negotiation, persuasion, organisation, ability to work under pressure, confidence maintaining ambiguity, resilience, analytical skills, entrepreneurial skills, IT skills, super strength, invisibility, flight and web slinging abilities....

Seriously though – who has all of these skills at once? They must be some sort of super human!

There's a song – that is the theme tune to a medical comedy called Scrubs – it's called "I'm no superman" and it speaks to this sort of culture, saying if you get out of the door just in time, that'll do. It speaks of a sense of crossing the finishing line and winning the race, but lost your mind – was it worth it after all?

A society in which individuals are expected to be available 24/7, to answer emails the moment they arrive, if not before, to be at the beck and call of each whim, to do their own work and the work of several other people, to arrive early and work late, to keep up in the fast paced world of 'instant' and to expend themselves in the relentless pursuit of the next big thing for the benefit of the next big company ...

Surely there's something more?

More to life than this?

Today's passage speaks to this culture. It says – no – there is another way.

What are the skills needed to follow Jesus? Well none – look at the disciples – '**come and follow me**' Jesus said to a bunch of fishermen. And this bunch of fishermen were taken as they were, and at once they followed Jesus – this is the same bunch of fishermen that went to fish for people, to lead the church, to build the church and heroes of the faith.

And they maybe didn't have all the skills – but they were called anyway. They had a gifting in fishing and Jesus was going to use that simple skill to do something incredible for his kingdom.

Called by a God who created and knows them, deeply. He could see the potential in them and was willing to invest in them.

Anyone can be a disciple – gifting or a spectacular education are not requirements to become a disciple.

There is something that does matter however. Let's look back at the passage **Mark 1: 14 – 20**.

Mark's Gospel is one that is somewhat fast paced, but then again Jesus' ministry did have that sense of immediacy. Jesus is walking along the shore of the lake and sees the fishermen, calls them to follow him and then ...

Immediately, or at once the men follow Jesus. There's no hesitancy – they receive an offer and they take it up, no delay. Even leaving their nets, their boats, hired men and even their father!

So you don't need any special skills or qualifications to follow Jesus, you are called as you are, with your skills and talents ... that makes you '**you**.'

And those skills and talents can be used to further God's Kingdom, but only if you **PTO**

are willing to leave some things behind.

Quite often there is this sense of I'll follow Jesus in my own way, or I'll just do this bit if it fits with the rest of my life or if it fits with what I want at that time. But that isn't the example of following Jesus we have here.

The disciples at once lay down their nets. At once they lay down the very thing that has been sustaining them, that has been providing for them that has given them a purpose. They follow Jesus' call onwards because of something that compels or propels them onward. They put their trust entirely in him.

I wonder what God is calling us to today?

I wonder if for some of us he is calling us to follow him in a new way, to trust him with our lives, with our own set of skills, and to follow him.

The invitation to Peter, Andrew, James and John is an invitation into such a relationship. "Follow Me" be with me, get to know me, enjoy my friendship. But also, share my mission. "**I will make you fish for people**": you will teach and preach, heal and serve, as I do. What a responsibility! But also, what a privilege!

For some that may mean that we have to put things down, lay things down, leave things behind – even something that has caught many fish, something that has been sustaining or fulfilling. And that can be painful, and hard. To lay aside their livelihood and even their own family ... To lay aside our lively hood, our lives, our particular interests skills or giftings, even something that has 'born' many fish ... Because he calls us to something better.

The disciples went on to fish for people, to found and lead the church.

We are called into God's future, to multiply his kingdom, to be salt and light to the world, to be examples of faithful followers.

So does that mean you have to become a missionary or a church leader?

No.

For some, your calling is into teaching, into work in the health services or shops. For some your calling is to speak into the community, particularly communities you may find yourself being drawn to be part of. You are missionaries in those communities too – with your friends, or even your family.

It may be that you have a calling to a particular aspect of church life, of service pastorally, in intercession ...

When God calls us to something new our response should be, as the disciples did, to at once, to immediately follow even if that means laying something down, or leaving something behind.

It's an invitation to follow Christ ... and to do so with the knowledge and trust in the love and salvation offered to each of us through Christ.