**9th July 2017**

**Luke 5:1–11**

It is one of the tenets of faith that behind all things is Someone. There is a Creator. In the mystery of creation and evolution is the mysterious Other – we are more than the sum of our parts – there is more than this.

I heard about a little girl who was sitting on her grandfather’s lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, Sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God’s getting better at it, isn’t he?"

Since the beginning God has attempted to get people’s attention and to call them into a commitment to live with principles, values, and sense of sacredness that God wants from all humanity. Sometimes the people heard and responded to God, and sometimes they ignored God.

All through scripture are accounts of encounters between humanity and God and the call of God to humanity to know they are loved and they belong and have meaning.

It is in the living, breathing person of Jesus that we believe we really see all things we call holy, such as forgiveness, sharing, joy, vision, courage, perseverance, and especially love. We might think we understand love, for example, but when we receive totally unconditional love from another person, love takes on a completely new meaning for us. When we experience being a parent, love takes on a new meaning also.

Jesus shows us the ultimate example of love, namely, God’s love. Seeing this example in the flesh makes all the difference in the world for us. Being baptized into Christ is a high calling to immerse yourself in that love and follow that way of love in the name of love.

Bear Grylls is an ex SAS soldier and now ultimate survival expert and TV Personality and chief Boy Scout. In an interview in the Alpha newspaper he said:

*‘it took me a long time to find out that real faith isn’t becoming weird or about giving up on fun – it was finding out that I was held, forgiven and loved regardless.*

*Church should be more like a hospital, where we are all a bit damaged and muddling our way through together. It’s OK to be a bit dirty and bloody, not all perfect and healed.*

*Christianity is about discovering that in the business and struggles of life we are not alone and that this Jesus is actually beside us. Faith is that backbone that we all need in our lives.’*

He and his wife Shara married in 2000 and did an Alpha Course soon afterwards. Bear doesn’t pretend that life has been easy. He said ;

*‘Our faith has been a real rock to us as a couple so many times when things have been hard.*

*Both Shara and I lost our Dads within a few months of each other when we were first married – my faith, despite it being at times pretty weak, has helped us struggle through all the pain and anger of that loss.*

*It’s still in many ways very raw, but my Dad died with a steadfast hope that heaven and Jesus are real. I want to live that way too.*

*Also, having Jesse my son, has restored so much of my faith. To kneel beside his little bed, and watch him hold his hands together with his eyes shut, and say his prayers together is like heaven to me.*

*It is the most natural thing in the world and I feel a presence of God that I have only ever felt a few times before.’*

The Kingdom of God belongs to children, you know. Before they get skeptical and cynical, they ae a window into heaven. They have a lot to teach us about trust and love.

The call of Jesus to some fishermen, changed their lives and ended up changing the world. Let’s think about how Jesus calls people to follow him today.

Three gospels record the story of Jesus calling the fishermen. Luke’s version includes much more detail than the other two. Luke pictures the scene, probably a little cove where a crowd has gathered to hear Jesus. It was probably a natural amphitheatre and Jesus did a neat bit of resourcefulness in commandeering a boat pushed out q little from the shore and then was able to use the natural acoustics to talk to the crowd.

So with these fishermen listening to his every word he turns the spotlight on them. They haven’t caught any fish and although its daylight, when the fish are less likely to be caught because they can see the nets, Jesus tells them to put out into deep water and let down your nets. Simon is at first sceptical but decides to give Jesus a chance. The rest as they say is history. The nets are bulging with s huge catch. Simon prostrates himself in awe ‘go Lord, leave me, sinner that I am! But Jesus doesn’t go. He instead tells them not to be afraid – from now on they will be catching people. And so they leave everything and follow him.

It’s a well known and evocative story full of rich symbolism.

Three things I want say.

**First of all, it is often the Darkest before the Dawn**

These fishermen were doing the things they normally do but it wasn’t working. Sometimes in life you feel you are not going anywhere – but then things can change.

George Frederick Handel was dogged with misfortune. He had debt upon debt, despair upon despair. He had a cerebral haemorrhage and was paralyzed on his right side. For four years he could neither walk nor write. The doctors gave up on him. He wrote several operas, but again he fell in debt. At age 60 he thought his life was finished. Then he was challenged by a friend to write a sacred oratorio. He read the Scriptures and decided to work on the Messiah. For 24 days, without eating a crumb, he worked fanatically to produce the Messiah, which many today consider the greatest oratorio ever written.

The prospects of something great happening can look grim. Peter had fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus asked him to let down his nets for a catch. It seemed foolish to do so, because Peter knew there were no fish to catch. "But at your word," he said, "I will let down the nets" (v. 5). Sometimes it has to be the darkest point before the dawn.

**Secondly those disciples were called to put out into the deep.**

When I was learning to swim I remember the instructor saying stay in the shallow end – don’t go into the deep end. And I was terrified of crossing that line. Being in the early 1970s Jaws had just come out as a movie and I think I had this fear that the deep end was shark infested.

We use the expression we are in too deep – to suggest that we have taken on too much – or what we are involved in is beyond our means, our competency, and our knowledge. Other people talk about people going deep when they start talking about their emotions or deep feelings, or values or faith. I’ve been in conversations with people and say we get talking about what happens after death and they say ‘oh that’s a bit too deep fro me!’ – They don’t want to go there- because they might be afraid to confront such issues– better to stay on the surface – stay with the superficial stuff of life – don’t go deep.

I’m not sure whether Luke intended the symbolism but it’s there to be used– Jesus saying go deep – don’t be afraid.

What for you are the scary deep waters? The places where you maybe stretched and challenged. The deep of your own emotions and faith.

Lord is calling us on – to go deeper – we need to be listening out for his call.

In our British society faith is mocked and seen as irrational and blind. There is the joke about the child in Sunday school who, when asked by his mum what he learned in Sunday school, tells his mum, ‘we learned that faith is believing what you know isn’t so. Or as some else put it’ faith is believing what nobody would believe if it weren’t in the Bible’.

Such a view is no laughing matter and deeply affects our confidence and willingness to stand up for our faith as well as share our faith – to be fishers of men and women.

Today I believe we are called to go deep – dig deeper in our understanding of our faith, how we know and understand the Bible, how we work out our faith. Faith is not blind. These disciples left everything for Jesus but they surely knew him beforehand. He had been in that part of Galilee for some time. Faith comes from knowledge – assent and then commitment. Working out what you believe, having confidence in it then committing and trusting and acting on it.

**Finally there was a call to adventure**.

Something about Jesus' message made the disciples eager for the journey that was presented to them? Jesus offered them a change and a mission that promised to be a challenge. And their lives would never be the same.

The great explorer, Sir Francis Drake, was attempting to recruit a number of young men for an upcoming exploration. He gathered them around and told the group that if they came with him they would see some of the most marvellous things their eyes could ever behold. Sandy white beaches, juicy fruits, foreign peoples, priceless treasures, and gorgeous landscapes. And he told them that this wild adventure could be theirs if they came with him. Not one of them enlisted for the journey.

The next day a different group came out. Drake told them that if they came with him they would encounter storms that would terrify them into tears. Tiger winds would hammer them and blow them off course for months. Water would frequently be scarce. At times they will be so thirsty that their very souls would cry out for simply one drop of water. In short, danger
would always be their constant companion. Drake concluded by declaring that if they could handle these things, the joys of exploration would exceed their wildest dreams. Every single one of them in the group joined Sir Francis Drake that day, some did not even go home to say goodbye to their families, they just boarded the boat eager for the journey.

What made the difference in these two groups? Why did the first group turn down the mission and the second jump at the chance? Was the second group different and more adventurous than the first? Maybe it wasn’t the men who had changed; it was the message. The first spoke of rewards; the second spoke of challenges. The first offered comfort; the second promised suffering. The first tempted them with things; the second seduced them with an experience unlike any other.

I like to think that Sir Francis Drake discovered what Jesus knew all to well. And that is this: The paths that are offered to us must promise to shape us, build our character, change our world view, if they are to have any appeal to us at all. If we are presented with a challenge that will change, we will be eager for the journey.

Any who tells you that being a Christian is boring hasn’t tried it, or doesn’t get it. It is a great and costly challenge to follow Jesus Christ.

Peter was not called because he had any special qualifications except for the fact he made a choice to go where Jesus led him. He was also called in the midst of his daily living. It didn't take place in some holy place like the temple. He was aware of his own personal failings but while Jesus helped him to see himself, he then said ‘don’t be afraid - follow me’

Christ calls to us: you are loved: follow me.