

Luke 5:1-11

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In February 1885 seven young men sailed for China. Perhaps nothing strange in that except that here were seven young men, now known as the Cambridge Seven because they were all Cambridge graduates. They sailed in order to be involved in Christian ministry in China. The seven included CT Studd who had been captain of the University Cricket team and had played for England in the ashes, Stanley P Smith, who had been stroke in the Cambridge 8. Here were men who were “renouncing the careers in which they had already gained no small distinction. Putting aside the splendid prizes of earthly ambition, taking leave of the social circles in which they shone with no mean brilliance, and plunging into that warfare whose splendours are seen only by faith” (CT Studd by Norman Grubb p48)

Earlier this month I was talking with Michael and Nicki Duncalfe and they mentioned that next year it will be 20 years since they went with MAF to Papua New Guinea.

What is it that causes these and many others to give up so much and travel to parts of the world where climate, culture and so much else is so different?

Then I can think of a friend who was quite high up in one of the computer companies and gave that up to train to be a Vicar and is now happily working away in a couple of small parishes.

What makes people sacrifice so much to work for God?

It is a good question because when you think of CT Studd he had so much going for him in terms of his cricket but also family and finance and yet he gave it up to go to China. His family tried to persuade him not to because it didn't make sense. So what made him and the others do it.

Well the simple answer as I am sure you are aware is Jesus.

But then we have to ask why did Jesus exert such influence over the lives of these people that it caused such a radical change in their lives and should he have the same effect in our lives?

There is another account of a young businessman who gave up his business, left behind most of his family simply in response to Jesus. His name was Simon and we know him as Peter. But again we ask why and to help us think it through we look at this passage in Luke 5.

Here we see how Jesus was on the beach by the Sea of Galilee and talking to the crowd. The crowd was so big that seeing a couple of boats there he asked Simon, who owned one of them, for permission to get in it and go just a little way out so people could see and hear him better.

On the beach just over a week ago I watched man with a group of youngsters in their boats and I could hear every word he was saying.

Well Peter listened with the rest and when Jesus had finished he asked Peter to go a bit further out and let down the nets. Even though Peter had fished all night and caught nothing he did as Jesus said. They caught a huge catch. The whole thing stunned Peter and recognising something powerful

in Jesus wanted out of it but Jesus instead asked Peter to follow him and be involved in catching men rather than fish. As a result v11 “they pulled their boats up on the shore left everything and followed him”. The threads of why are there within the passage. I wonder if you can see what it was that caused this great change in the lives of Peter, James and John on that day and which had caused many others to make similar decisions? Let’s see if we can tease the threads out.

### **1. Jesus the teacher with authority v1-3**

So there I was struggling with 16 fourteen year old boys when the door opened someone came in and barked “Gregan sit down now”. There was silence and each boy sat up straight. The voice of authority from a senior teacher took effect. Is that what we mean when we say that Jesus taught with authority? I think not.

Back in Luke 4:31-32 we read, “Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.”

The authority lay not a big booming voice but in the nature of the person and in the origin of the word. Here in v1 it says they were listening to the “word of God”. Here is what caused amazement and gave what Jesus said authority that people sensed at the time and then recognised later that what Jesus spoke was the very word of God. When he spoke it was God speaking because he is God. Part of what caused Peter to follow Jesus was the fact that what he had heard, while on the shore and in the boat as Jesus spoke, had real power because it was the word of God. So when Jesus in effect asked him to follow he did.

For CT Studd when his parents tried to persuade him not to go to China it was the word of God assuring him that this was God’s will which tipped the balance.

When Jesus says come and follow me he is not like a politician saying join my party. He is not some wise man who says I think I have an idea of how society should be. He is not some egotist saying I’m great follow me. He is God saying this is the way you were created to live so come and live my way, the way of Jesus. It is not the big booming voice a la Brian Blessed or the senior teacher in my class, but God’s gentle soft call to each to follow Jesus. The word of authority because it is the word of God.

### **2. Jesus the man who did miracles v4-7**

Having listened to Jesus, Peter did what Jesus asked when Jesus said, ““Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Even though he had hesitation his response was, “because you say so”. The word of authority had an impact even though Peter had every reason not to do what Jesus suggested. They had been fishing all night which suggests that their nets were a linen type of net which is visible to fish in day light but invisible at night. If they couldn’t do it at night they weren’t

going to do it during the day. Yet Peter says “because you say so” and he referred to Jesus as “Master” and seems to accept the authority of Jesus.

Then we see what happened they caught a large number of fish. Here is a miracle and the size of the miracle echoes things like the amount of water that became wine and the huge number of people fed by five loaves and two fish. There was no human reason for this catch of fish. It was because of who Jesus is.

Why did Peter follow Jesus, because of what Jesus did. He saw the miracle and that underlined the teaching. Here was a man who not only taught the word of God but showed the power of God.

When Peter saw what he saw why would he not follow this man?

Now we have to be a bit wary here because it is not because of what Jesus did alone that Peter or others have followed Jesus.

We see so often in history the attraction of powerful people and how easily they can draw people to them. Indeed we must also understand that it was not just the word and actions of Jesus alone that causes people to follow.

I was watching the news the other evening, you know the bit that was not about a baby! And in it there was a piece about the coming elections in Zimbabwe. There you see Mugabe who has held power for so long and his speech encouraging his supporters to vote and the response of the crowd. Words and actions going together to create followers who have in many ways destroyed that nation. So words and powerful actions are not necessarily the reasons why we should follow.

### **3. Jesus God who forgives v8-10a**

The words and especially the actions of Jesus caused consternation in Peter. Indeed Peter asks Jesus to go away. There are many both inside and outside Zimbabwe who hear the words of Robert Mugabe and see his actions and wish him to as it were go away. But that is not what we have here. It was not simple terror that gripped Peter. No he has seen in Jesus and heard from Jesus things which he recognises as from God. So he responded by falling at Jesus’ feet in humility referring to himself as a sinner unworthy of the attention of this man Jesus. Now those who are still awake will recognise that Jesus didn’t say I forgive you. But in this action of Peter and in a sense in what Jesus doesn’t say we see the beginning of what will become apparent later and that is Jesus is God and as God he does associate with sinful people.

Peter in effect said to Jesus “go away from me because I am sinful”. However, rather than do that Jesus tells Peter he wants Peter with him. Jesus is the friend of sinners (Luke 7:34). As such we also cannot say to Jesus you don’t want anything to do with me because I am too sinful.

Peter saw what Jesus did, he heard Jesus words, he recognised something of God in Jesus and, knowing himself felt himself unworthy to be with this man.

He was of course because Jesus is God but Jesus would later give up his life a sacrifice for Peter's sin so that Peter might be forgiven. When Peter says "I am a sinner" Jesus doesn't respond for the time is not now but later he would deal with that.

In one sense Peter followed because Jesus didn't reject him as unworthy but for us with our understanding of the cross and of forgiveness of sin through the cross this is what draws us to Jesus and this is what motivates us to sacrifice things so that we can follow him.

Going back to CT Studd who did give up so much his statement was "If Jesus be the son of God and died for me then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him."

We follow Jesus not because of his power and his words, good as they are, but supremely because here is God who gave his life for our forgiveness.

Why did Peter follow, I suggest because he heard what Jesus said, he saw what Jesus did, he recognised something of God in Jesus and then found that Jesus didn't reject him. Then he followed because

#### **4. Jesus is the Lord who calls v10b-11**

In one sense Jesus doesn't use the words of call that we see in other gospels. However it is clear that this is what is happening in that Jesus was asking Peter to switch from one task to what was a very different task and yet Jesus used words to link the two together.

I remember back to summer 1975, and spending a holiday with two friends and one of the big topics of our conversation and prayer was whether I should go forward for ordination. In the end through prayer and chat we all decide that Jesus was in effect saying to me, the school teacher, "from now on you will teach the gospel". Here Peter heard the words of Jesus, "from now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10).

Having heard and seen Jesus when the Master asked him to follow Peter did and not just him but James and John as well.

No one is suggesting it was easy but v11 tells us they pulled up their boats and just walked away from it all. Now for the completer finishers amongst us that it terrible, what about all the fish, what about their nets and equipment and so on?

The point is here that nothing is more important than following Jesus nothing, more important than serving him when he calls. When he called me I left a job I had been in for four years and had trained for over three years. I left the flat I was sharing. I left a church and friends there. Why did I do that because I had heard the gospel and come to faith. I had seen the work of Jesus in my life and the lives of others and above all I heard him call me to follow him in this new way.

Jesus still calls people today. He calls those who are not yet followers to come and follow him. Why should we do that? Because of what we hear from Jesus telling us of his love for us, what we hear

about Jesus, who he is, his nature as God and because of what he has done, not just the great miracles but his death on the cross. If you are here today and have not accepted that call or if you are listening to this on download and are yet to start following Jesus let me encourage you to hear his call today and respond with a yes.

But then many of us have been following for sometime and it may be that Jesus is saying to us I want you to do something for me. It wasn't long ago that Gordon heard the call to be ordained. That may not be the way for us but there may be some area of service either here in Christ Church or elsewhere that God has for us.

Peter was in a sense the first in a long line of Christians down the ages who have heard Jesus calling them to follow and calling them to service. Through the words of Jesus and his actions they have taken seriously that call and countless thousands have responded some like CT Studd giving up much to take the gospel to a very different culture others to mission and ministry in the place where they work. The response often does mean sacrifices have to be made but the cause of the kingdom of God and the gospel makes those sacrifices worthwhile.