

Study

Read Luke 5: 1-11 again, remembering that Luke chose his material carefully.

What details give us the impression that this is an eyewitness account? Why did Luke include this incident? What does it tell us about Jesus? Why is it significant for Peter (and James and John)?

Read Isaiah 6: 1-8; Isaiah 57:15; 1 John 3: 19-20.

What do these verses tell you about the nature of God; and the role of repentance in our relationship with him?

Living it out (Application):

Which verse(s) in the **Study** section speak to you most powerfully? Can you take them with you into this week?

Coming Up at St Mark's

Trip to the Holy Land. March 2015. There will be an introductory meeting at Guy's at 7.30pm this Tuesday 4th March.

Ash Wednesday: Join us at 11am or 7pm to begin our journey through Lent.



prayer

Please pray for...

Pray for our **Mother's Union**, and give thanks for **Vicki Brown**, who has been leading the group for six years – we are very grateful for Vicki! Pray for the new committee who begin this weekend.

Pray for **Craft Aid International**, for Susie Hart and the team, and give thanks for the way the work is expanding.

Pray for **Bishop Nick Baines**, as he prepares to lead the new diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales from June. Pray that the creation of this new area will enable **mission to be effective**.

Pray for the **Vision for Mission** day in Harrogate on Saturday June 14th – a feast of different types of church – and for Tim Cundy and Karin Shaw who are involved in organising it.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for the **Naked Truth Project**, after Ian's visit with us this weekend. Pray that the spiritual grip that distorts human beings' sexuality could be broken.

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



ASH
WEDNESDAY

Week beginning: 2nd March 2014

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

This Wednesday is **ASH WEDNESDAY** and there are services at 11 and 7. After that we will be holding central gatherings throughout Lent on Wednesday evenings for the whole church, which I hope you can make a big priority – it's fantastic that we can pray together. Next week we will give out a booklet for everyone with our journey through Lent – I'm very excited about it! The Lent content for this week – Wednesday to Sunday, is in the noticesheet. God bless and love, Guy.

Worship/reflection:

Read aloud Psalm 130. Spend some time quietly allowing the words to speak to you, then respond in prayer.

Luke 5: 1-11. Following Jesus: Repentance

After all the extremes of weather we've been having recently, it's tempting to think of escaping to somewhere warmer. So how about a trip to Israel, and more specifically Capernaum beside the Sea of Galilee? That's where our current readings from Luke take place. Last week we were in the synagogue, and Simon Peter's house. This week we're down at the lakeside. Feel the warmth on your skin, hear lap of the waves on the shingle, and experience the pervading smell of fish. Look at the boats pulled up onto the shore, fishermen busy mending nets; women with their baskets buying fish; children splashing in the shallow water; groups of people talking, doing business. A normal morning on Capernaum lakeside.

In the centre of one of these groups of people is Jesus, talking, laughing, listening, and gradually more people gravitate towards him, trying to hear what he has to say, wondering if he's going to do more dramatic healings, wanting to get a closer look at the man everyone is talking about. Then Jesus breaks away from the group, and goes over to Simon Peter and

After some discussion we see Jesus climbing into the boat, Simon pushes the boat into the water and jumps in. Maybe Jesus wants to get away for some peace and quiet – but, no, Simon rows out a little way, then stops, rests on his oars, and lets the boat drift. Jesus' voice carries clearly over the water as he starts teaching. And he's talking about the Kingdom of God, how God is breaking into society in a new way, how Scripture is being fulfilled, and God's power is being demonstrated in healing and forgiveness. Then he starts telling a storyAnd people sitting on the hillside behind the shoreline are silent, listening and wondering. This guy speaks with the same authority and magnetism out in the open air as he does in the synagogue on Sabbath!

The teaching comes to an end, the crowd drifts off, and in the boat, Simon Peter is doing some hard thinking. Jesus interrupts his thoughts: 'Come on, put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch'.

Why does Peter obey? He's been out all night and caught nothing, so he's very unlikely to catch anything now in broad daylight. Jesus knows nothing about fishing, whereas Peter has been in the business since he was a child. And yet he obeys – '*because you say so*'.

What has Peter seen in this man to make him trust him? Think back to last week's reading: Peter saw Jesus:

- **teaching** in the synagogue 4:32: *they were amazed...because his message had authority*. Implying it was different from others - it carried the conviction of someone who knew God personally.
- **casting out** a demon 4:35: *With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out*. There's a spiritual power within Jesus which makes him different....
- **healing** Peter's mother-in-law 4:39: Jesus rebuked the fever, and it left her. Again the implication of authority and power....
- **healing** many others 4:40. It was the end of a long day, but Jesus didn't send anyone away; *laying his hands on each one, he healed them...* a willingness to give himself generously.
- **going out** into a solitary place to pray 4:42. Peter saw that the strength of Jesus came from time alone with God - not magic to be turned on and off, but the strength of a relationship with his Father.

Peter is getting to know this extraordinary man, and he's beginning to trust him – so the professional fisherman goes against his instincts and lets down the nets. The result is almost catastrophic – so many fish that even with the help of their partners they almost lose the lot. No-one expects this! What is Peter's reaction? He is terrified – he just doesn't have the experience or the resources to help him make sense of it. His life is about to be turned upside down and he doesn't like it one little bit. Jesus is literally rocking the boat, and he's not prepared for it. So he falls at Jesus' knees 5:8, and says '*Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man.*'

1. **worship** – falls down, calls him Lord. As good Jew, Peter should not be worshipping anyone but God.
2. a sense of **sin** – *I am a sinful man*.
3. **fear** – *go away from me*he suddenly feels very vulnerable

Peter is beginning to get a clearer view of who Jesus is - realises that somehow to be in Jesus' presence is to be also in God's presence; he has seen the power and authority of God's Spirit in Jesus, and that leads him to see the holiness of God in Jesus..... all leading to an overwhelming consciousness of sin and unworthiness. This encounter between Peter and Jesus has at its heart REPENTANCE – it turned Peter's life around, just as it will ours. Repentance in this story has three elements:

1. a true, realistic view of Jesus
2. a true, realistic view of ourselves
3. a movement forward into discipleship and service.

Our view of Jesus:

We may find it easier to relate to Jesus as a man than as God. Many of us grow up with a strong love and admiration and friendship with Jesus, maybe from early childhood; we know the stories, we can imagine him, we know he's our friend, we know he loves us. But there comes a point where we need to move into a relationship with Jesus as God; we don't lose the friendship and love, but we begin to see his power and authority, and at that point it's right that a sense of awe, fear, reverence and worship comes into our relationship. '*In him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground – be still*'. Repentance starts by being still in Jesus' presence, as we realise who he is.....

Our view of ourselves:

This was a big step in Peter's relationship with Jesus – admiration for Jesus the man gives way to worship of Jesus, his Lord. But it's not a very comfortable place to be - he's afraid, he doesn't know how to handle this new relationship, so he tries to push Jesus away. And his way of expressing this fear is to say 'I am sinful, I am not good enough for you. It's like bright sunlight streaming through the window – you thought the window was clean, but now you realise that there are smears and marks on it. You thought the furniture in the room was clean, but now you realise there is dust on the table, and a grubby mark on the carpet. Peter is suddenly aware of the bright light of God shining into his life, and showing up all the grubbiness and dust. *I am a sinful man!* Does that ring true at all for you? Repentance is letting God's light shine into our hearts, and acknowledging the sin we didn't realise was so entrenched in there.

Movement forward:

How does Jesus' respond? '*Don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men and women.*'

Jesus is going to move Peter on - he knows all about his fears and anxieties, he doesn't belittle him by contradicting his confession, he accepts him as he is – but he says '*don't be afraid.*' Peter has taken an important step forward, by seeing more clearly who Jesus is, and, by comparison, who he is. So Jesus can take him forward again – 'Come with me' he's saying 'join me in my work. You don't need to be afraid of the spiritual power you see in me, because that will be the driving force of your life too. You don't need to be afraid of your own inadequacy and failure, because you're coming to work with me and together we can catch hundreds of fish – or better still, people.'

Once Peter was in that place of repentance, that's when Jesus commissioned him, got him involved with the everyday task of building his Kingdom. And Peter's response? – *they pulled up their boats on shore, left **everything** and followed him*. Repentance is never an end in itself only a step on the road of total commitment. We follow the story of Peter's discipleship as we work our way through Luke, but everything I've said about him can be true for us too in our own discipleship:

living alongside Jesus, realising who he is – a close friend, and a holy Lord;

accepting who we are, as we stand in his light;

moving on with him, leaving behind what we no longer need, to whatever he calls us

to in the future. And that isn't a once-for-all event – it's an ongoing way of life.