

SERMON

Luke 5:1-11

Participation, not Obligation

Nunawading and Waverley, 6-2-22

Dear friends in Christ,

If there's one way of making Christians feel guilty it's to highlight their failure to evangelise; to see their friends, relatives or colleagues come to faith; to be effective and bold gospel sharers. That always finds us lacking. A better way to see this is to think of Jesus inviting you to **let down your nets** to catch some fish, meaning our friends. You could still say, but I have to talk to people, influence them, persuade them and invite them to things. Then, let's look at this slide. This is a dandelion seed head. That is you and me. Christ has filled us with his love, presence and acceptance. He has poured his life into us and forgiven us. Now, we have received much so that we can give away his love, give away his forgiveness, share his compassion and his wisdom, like seeds blown on the wind. All he is asking from us is that we make another person's life better. Rather than an obligation it is a joy because we are participating in his power to change peoples' lives; we are simply offering a gift.

Another thing we may not appreciate is that Jesus has gone ahead of us and is already active in the lives of every person on this planet, including Putin. He showed Peter and the others with him, how much power he had. He could see where the fish were, he could gather them into one place right where the boat was. He could then choose the right moment to say, **let down your nets!** Maybe you do not believe in miracles. A miracle is a demonstration of God's love for us. It is the power he has within himself that he wishes to bring into our lives to support us, guide us, teach us and finally to deliver us. Jesus offered his power to Peter even when Peter was unsure about him and hardly knew him. Christ is so full of kindness that he has to show it to others even if they care nothing for him. Now, Jesus has returned to heaven and he has authority over everything in this universe. He has gone ahead of us to prepare people for our invitation. We go in his power.

The risen Jesus, the Lord of life who has overcome death, has a whole new creation in his hand and a new future for each one of us. He has removed all our past failures, turned our shame into honour, and defeated the devil himself and the evil we sometimes experience. He has died, once and for all. All authority has been given to him. Nothing can stop him.

Nothing can unseat him. Nothing can ever come between you and him. Nothing can undo what he has done. He lives forever to lead us, guide us, pray for us, and empower us. Jesus stands above and over the whole world; and yet he accompanies us even as he sends us to **let down our nets** and catch people for him.

Jesus has made us partners with God in what he is doing. Reaching out to others and bringing their lives to completion is his work but it is his work through you and me. 'Duty' language - the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' and 'musts' of evangelism – implies that we are doing something for God. In reality, we are doing something with God. Or, even better, God is doing something with us. If a pilot step out of the cockpit and said, "Why don't you try flying it?" you would think this is a great chance. If an interior decorator said, "I have an unlimited budget, would you like to decorate this house with me?" wouldn't you jump at the opportunity? That is what Jesus is doing; he is inviting us to join him on an exciting adventure with him. The Holy Spirit is doing the navigating and showing us the way forward. What if you were that dandelion and one of your seeds, which is really Jesus' seeds, drifted out from you on a gentle breeze and landed on someone and turned her whole life around? She found peace. She found the truth and could understand what is going wrong with the world and what the answer is. Then you would think, "That is amazing the way God used me to help her."

We're used to thinking that the Church has a mission. We talk about "the mission of the Church"; But what if the Church doesn't have a mission? What if God's mission has a church? If God's mission has a church, he's in the driving seat, not us. If God's mission has a church, he's navigating, not us. If God's mission has a church, we are participants, not spectators. Jesus took Peter, what he had, his boat and nets and showed him that he could use what he had to catch a net full of fish. That is how he is taking us into his mission to other people. He will use what we have to help them meet and know him as their friend and Saviour. Not obligation but participation.