

WELCOME 28 January 2018 4 Epiphany '18 B

Mark 1:14-20

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you here this morning. Please stay for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

Later this morning we'll be blessing our school supplies & school people...teachers, students, lecturers, helpers.... That's a reminder that it doesn't take long into a new year for everything to get back into the normal swing of things. The day by day routines of work, home & school. Nothing much changes. One day looks like another.

It was like that for the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee too. Every day was the same. Casting & mending. If they weren't in their boats casting for fish, they were on the shore mending their nets. That's the reality of our lives too. We cast & mend to make a living, to feed our family, to pay the bills, to hold our family/marriages together, to raise our children to get through the day. Casting & mending.

It is however, in these everyday circumstances that Jesus comes with his invitation, they are the context in which we hear the call to new life, & the place where our lives are transformed & the ordinary becomes extraordinary. Really?

You've heard him...you'll hear him again today...**"Come, follow me, & I will show you how to fish for people!"**

There is no better offer or greater invitation you can receive than the one Jesus gives you to follow him. It's both the invitation to & the promise of new life, giving your everyday lives & routine circumstances eternal meaning & purpose.

Jesus invites you to follow him, to live & grow with him & to join him in his saving work. **Who is Jesus?** The one & only Son of God who comes for all, who is love, who knows you, knows God, makes God known to us & also the **one who invites** And every invitation comes with an opportunity to respond...What will yours be?

We'll explore & experience that together today.

LWKids is gearing up & will restart Feb 18th.

If you'd like to be part of that team leading our kids...see me today!

4 Epiphany '18 B – WHO IS JESUS? THE ONE WHO INVITES

- FAITH CHAT:**
1. What is the most interesting invitation you've ever received? What'd you do?
 2. Have you ever sensed Jesus "inviting" you to something? What'd you do?

Leonie received an invitation this week...same kind Bec received a few weeks back. You've probably had one of those too...Jury summons! I guess technically it's not an invitation...It's a summons complete with penalties for ignoring it. But in many ways, you can see it as an invitation: to serve...to play a role in your community...to take part in the legal system of the country...those are important things. Those matter in places like Australia where we aim to uphold democratic institutions & the rule of Law.

Over the years I've received some amazing invitations. Zondervan publishing invited me to be on a test market panel (all pastors!) But it was funny because they didn't tell us until the end of the evening who they were & what they were after from the test group. They surveyed our Bible use patterns, habits & preferences...My input went the completely opposite direction to their marketing strategy. Anyone really surprised by that?

Living in No Tx we used to have lots of invitations like that. It was market research central Frito-Lays used to come to churches/pay us to organize taste tests of their products. Snacks, crackers & chips of varied kinds. So our pre-school would get hundreds of folks to show up on a the day & we'd all go eat chips & crackers & snack things & reflect on colour, shape, size, crunchiness, flavour etc... Invite me to eat snack food! I'd go 3 times a day if they'd have let me...They didn't.

But I've never been invited to an Avon/Tupperware/Mary Kay evening...Never will for a very good reason...I'm not their market...or in that circle of interest & influence. I'll never be invited to a tractor/seed/livestock test group for exactly the same reason I don't expect someone trying to develop new fertilizers or a new header attachment or better IVF for cows wants my input...for good reason.

It's a simple rule...where you are is likely what you know best. It was fun last week when Brad Miller was here introducing him to a wide range of people in our community who all have a particular place where they are an expert...allowing them to share that expertise in that place. I learned a ton...thank you. But in all seriousness, you know what you do...you are most familiar with the place & people where you hang out. No surprise really but it is critical...because...

Where you are is where Christ calls you. Without question, most of the folks transformed by Jesus in the NT never left their hometown. In many cases we remember that Jesus would heal, or cast out a demon & then send that person back to where they came from so they could tell their families & friends about the mighty work God had done in their lives. The woman Jesus meets at the well in Samaria evangelizes her whole town...& goes nowhere else. The vast majority of Jesus followers never go beyond their daily circle of influence except as ripples...where they impact a life & that life touches others that touch others that...you know how ripples work. Apostles & travelling evangelists & church planters/builders were the exception not the rule

I find it fascinating...& somewhat unsettling...that Simon, Andrew, James & John are simply casting/mending, about the business of their daily routines, when Jesus walks up to them. They are not looking for Jesus. Did you hear that? They are not looking for Jesus. They are busy with their nets. It is another day of casting/mending. There is no spiritual seeking...no religious ritual...nothing to set this day apart from any other. They may not have even noticed Jesus when he strolled up, but he sees them & he speaks to them. Jesus has a way of showing up in the ordinary places of life, interrupting daily routines to create something new. *"Come, follow me"* is Jesus' invitation to new life.

If these four fishermen accept the invitation, their lives will forever be different. They will be different. How? They are being invited into a relationship – a fellowship – a companionship that lives & moves & has its essence centred on/in Jesus himself. Jesus offers them one thing: himself.

The good news that Mark lifts up 3 X in 15 verses is simply this: in a world that operates on dog eat dog survival of the fittest you get what you pay for /me/mine above all else...a new operating system is now "up & running" – that OS/principle/rule – grace mercy forgiveness compassion love joy peace goodness gentleness faith sacrifice servanthood generosity...it's Jesus. The tyranny of death is ended – the slavery to sin is broken & the oppression of evil is no more because of Jesus Christ The Good News means that you don't have to prove your worthiness to God or anyone else...striving for self-justification is over – securing your own destiny is done for – defining your own identity is done. He already loves you/has chosen you as his beloved & invites you to live that life by Christ in you through the Holy Spirit

Jesus invites them not to a program or a policy but to a person...himself. Jesus invites them into his way in the world...to reorient their lives based on his life...to comprehend at the deepest level that their lives have meaning & purpose on a universal scale...that they are & can be agents that transform the course of lives & history eternally...that their lives are part & parcel of the life God intends to give to the world through Jesus His Son...that God has chosen to be with – to be for – to redeem & restore & reclaim in love...

I will show you how to fish for people Hear this because I'm pretty sure I've gotten this wrong in the past...or at least blunted the power of this part of the invitation. I want us to get this...because I have so often missed it.

Jesus is not saying "Go recruit new members" He is not saying "Get more butts on the seats" He is not saying "We need more folks here to help pay the bills" I actually know a church leader who framed a discussion in their church council around that necessity...Not saying, "Get out & do more evangelizing" –

But in the context of the Kingdom of grace, mercy, forgiveness, love, joy peace restoration renewal...of a day when all things are being made new...Jesus says of first importance: People matter to God. It seems almost silly to say that, self-evident perhaps...but how many times do you walk out of a shop or out of a faith community or out of someone's home & wonder if they knew you were there at all? In our rage for efficiency, our slavery to busy-ness, our captivity to technology & our pursuit of the latest/greatest/newest/whiz-bang thing, what has suffered most? Relationships. I just read the results of a US survey, it's headline: 63% of U.S. Dads Say They Don't Spend Enough Time With Their Kids. Who is surprised by that? Would we find a difference from those numbers in any Western market-driven economy or culture?

But in God's Kingdom it is not so. People are the pinnacle & the point of God's creation. This earth is custom-designed for us. All the other creatures have mates but only humans are blessed w/ "partner suitable" – what we know as husband or wife. Jesus comes as a child of this earth...born in blood & travail just like us. He lives dies & rises for us...& in the bargain all creation receives new life. Jesus is saying in clearest terms, "Shine the light of my love so people can see. Live so that those closest to you can experience me in you." All the "one anothers" are about people.

And let's turn this around from another perspective...Who are these guys? Fishermen. What do they do? Fish. But we know the Scriptures speak across all circumstances & kinds of people. It's certainly not recorded this way, but I imagine Jesus would have walked into the local Farmer's Co-op & said something like "Follow me, & I will show you how to grow God's people/plant God's love/harvest lives for eternity" In fact Jesus did say, "*The harvest is plentiful*". So my imagining is not so far afield.

To our teachers today he might have said, "Follow me & I will show you how to invest my wisdom in the hearts & minds of your students." To physicians he may have invited, "Follow me & through you I will bring genuine healing of body mind & soul." Paul thought of himself as a builder...used construction images throughout his letters...Would Jesus have looked at carpenters like Joseph & beckoned, "Follow me, & I will show you how to build my kingdom."

Jesus invites us by the power of his love/life in us to make real his "right now" rule of grace/peace/love wherever/however/whenever/whatever that requires of us. He says "Follow me...wherever I need you for whomever I need you."

That's going to look differently as we each live it out. Your call may not be the same as yours or mine. I don't expect all of you to head off for some distant country...or Bible College/Seminary...although some might do all those things. But the invitation is for each of us to make real through Christ who gives us strength of HS - grace to the outsider - forgiveness to the enemy - hope to the despondent – comfort to the sorrowing – fresh start to the struggling – support to those in need - \$\$\$ to mission/work of the church...That invitation is the challenge to each of us will make visible the life of Jesus – the Way of the Kingdom – the Character of the Father wherever we are in the routine of our lives...don't think this is simply about changing careers, disowning our family, & moving to a new town.

Whatever your life is, however you spend your time, wherever you occupy your hours of your day...there is where Jesus invites you "*Follow me & I will show you how to fish for people.*" Where you are is likely what you know best. Where you are is where Christ calls you. Where you are is the invitation to walk alongside God in God's own saving work...Shine the light of his love so people can see. Live so that those closest to you can experience him in you. To give flesh to the new OS/rule & reign of love grace mercy forgiveness sacrifice generosity compassion joy peace...

There is no better offer or greater invitation you can receive than the one Jesus gives you to follow him. It's both the invitation to & the promise of new life, giving your everyday lives & routine circumstances eternal meaning & purpose. Your life & mine – your routines & mine – your every day existence & mine are packed with people who have never heard that invitation...Never known they could drop their nets for something eternal. Never experienced grace/love/peace as transforming & life-altering & life-directing. Never known there was Good News for them.

Who's going to invite them if not us? Because every invitation comes with an opportunity to respond...

Let's pray together...Lord Jesus, your invitation makes every day precious and purposeful. Use me for your purposes here on earth wherever you need, however you require, for whomever you desire, whatever the cost. We pray in your name...Amen.