

## WELCOME 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025 – 4 Epiphany '25 C

Luke 5:1-11

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link is on website...

### **As we move into this week...**

**God** has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world

Just over 12 years ago...We received that call from God. Those were tough days. Challenging...Uncertain...Risky days. Not one of us had any real idea what it would mean/take/cost to actually obey/live out that identity...Called by God for God's glory... Inviting people into a life of living w/ Jesus as Jesus directed...Growing in likeness to him & being empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave...obeying his command to Love others as he loved us.

**"Master,** we worked hard all last night & didn't catch a thing.  
But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."

Now... 12 yrs & some later...Our world is every bit as uncertain. Challenges remain. The risks to any who take that call seriously persist. Life takes a toll & frustrations & fruitless seasons haunt our memories. But Jesus continues to call us to deeper trust in him & into new obedience & renewed engagement w/ him in his world.

Because it's there, w/ him in the deep water & difficult & uncertain work of his kingdom that he promises an abundance of blessing like we have never imagined.

We'll explore & experience that today...And answer as Simon did... *if you say so...I will...*

**Jesus** calls you into his mission & provides all that is necessary for His call to yield abundantly through your obedience.

*Let's pray...and then explore & experience that together...*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lead us today Father into the uncharted waters of faith...off our predictable paths to follow You into the unpredictable footsteps of the kingdom; to leave the comfort of our homes and accompany You into the uncomfortable neighbourhoods and conversations we usually avoid.*

*Speak to us, Lord Jesus through your Spirit of Grace: of that hope which is our anchor; of that peace which is our rock; of that love which is our refuge and of that joy that is our reward...Through Christ who is alone Lord & Saviour - Amen*

*Let's hear God's word...*

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Have you ever been part of a group project that failed? What was that like?
2. Where in your own life might God be calling you into long-term obedience despite previous failure or present objections?

### **Prayer after the sermon...**

*Father put to death in me everything but your presence. Bring to life in me only the image of your Son and the power of your Spirit. Let all that we are and all that we do lift your Name and your glory before the people around us & the people who live in this city. Widen your Kingdom's embrace in this town through our hearts and our hands. In Jesus' name we pray...Amen*

#### 4 Epiphany '25 C – ANSWERING THE “WHY?”: CALLED BY GOD

Sometimes we all need a children’s message... & while what I experienced at a conference back in August wasn’t really for children... I just have to share... The presenter took to the podium carrying a Sydney Roosters jumper... like you’d buy at a sporting goods store/BigW/Kmart... Looked like it came from under his bed or the bottom of a closet... He’s a Salvos pastor so it might have come from 1 of their stores. He wanted to auction it to the conference attendees. He made one addition to the exercise: We had each just won OzLotto. Roomful of millionaires sat <sup>b/4</sup> him ready to bid for the jumper. 1<sup>st</sup> bid was .50¢... then a dollar here & \$5 there then a few 100s & then folks got into it... a bidding war broke out & the next thing I heard was \$1M... then \$5M... & finally one woman went “all in”... \$65M! But then he got serious...

He asked, “Why did you only bid .50¢?” Hate the Roosters. I was going to burn that jumper out in the courtyard. “Why did you suddenly raise the bid so high?” I don’t know anything about sports but auctions are fun. I just wanted to play along. “Why did you go “all in” like that? I wanted to win.

Once we knew the “Why” it all made sense. “Why” is crucial. Every cop show on TV has ingrained in us, ‘motives matter’. Motivations... Intentions... Purposes... are critical. Every organizational constitution/Parliamentary inquiry in Australia begins w/ “objects,” – the “why” of the organization/pursuit. Life is shaped by the “why”. Energy & intensity come from the “why.” What’s sad... tragic even... Vast #s of people all around us live every day w/o the “why” of their lives... no idea “why” they’re drawing breath on this earth, **OR** they’re chasing a “why” that’s so insignificant/fleeting/fading as to be unworthy of human endeavor/meaningless. *That’s not you... AND... That’s not Living Water.*

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to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God

Our “why”... your “why”... Called by God for His Glory. Yrs ago Pr Rick Warren wrote his book “*The Purpose-Driven Life*” 1<sup>st</sup> chap he says: “You were made by God & for God, & until you understand that, life will never make sense.” To not know “why” you’re alive or “why” **WE** are a distinct community of followers of Jesus is to live forever confused uncertain afraid of missing out on the next “thing.” To not know “why” you’re alive or “why” **WE** are a distinct community of followers of Jesus is to live forever in pursuit of the insignificant, fleeting, & fading. Confession... that was me in many ways until about 15 yrs ago. Even as a pastor I was captivated by the “bigger is better & more is best” mindset... it’s everywhere among pastors/churches. Guilty as charged. I was convinced that a bigger church was a better church. You knew me back then & you probably know what I’m talking about... heard me say it...? I’ve just started reading a book called “*Metanoia*”...

It’s written by 2 Church consultants; leaders whose books fill my shelves & I’ve heard speak a few times. 1<sup>st</sup> page 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph knocked me down... One of the sad things about getting older is that every now & then you learn something that, had you known it 25 years ago, would have made life so much easier or less painful. “If I only knew then what I know now.” It’s weird looking back @ how often I lived for the wrong “why.” I wasn’t after bad stuff just things not always aligned w/ what I now understand as my/our “why.” Look at it again... memorized by now... 2<sup>nd</sup> nature

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Our “why”... your “why”... Called by God for His Glory. We are BY OUR VERY LIVES to reflect God’s greatness in all that we are. OUR VERY LIVES... everything about us is to be governed & guided by what we have been given by God in Jesus: love, hope, forgiveness, joy, peace, patience, restoration, reconciliation... to live lives made whole & complete not by our achievements or astounding accomplishments (bigger/better – more/best) but by his embrace of our lives in his death/resurrection... to live w/o fear guilt shame anxiety or the terrors of the grave... to live in victory in real time over evil & the futile fading promises of the world... website this week... to reflect in real visible tangible ways... that greatness... show the world that glory. That happens in 2 ways... 1<sup>st</sup> is internal & the 2<sup>nd</sup> is external... If you were going to take notes... **NOW!**

1<sup>st</sup> is internal... Jn 15:9 Jesus says, “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me.” If we don’t get that... we get nothing. There is something that happens in us when we know in the depths of our souls WE. ARE. LOVED... When we know that in spite of everything time/distance/distress/disaster Jesus has us & our best in his heart/hands ... when we don’t have to prove ourselves worthy... when even in the face of the often dirty, rugged, ugly truth about us; WE. ARE. LOVED. Jesus over & over again tells his disciples, the infinite unflinching unfaltering unceasing love of the Father **FOR HIM** is how he loves you/me. That his highest/deepest/greatest will be given for us & **IN THAT** sin/death/evil are obliterated... gone forever in his death/rez. 2<sup>nd</sup> is external... Then Jesus says... “Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments & remain in his love.” Stay there. Live remain abide walk exist carry out every moment from now on in my love & the way you do that is called obedience...

Which brings us to a bunch of worn out fishermen who have nothing but sore muscles & dirty nets to show for their best efforts... and a call from Jesus to **go** out where it is deeper, & let down your nets to catch some fish.” And you know that hurts Peter... it stings his heart. He’s the professional who tonight can’t pay his rent. He’s a

fisherman who can only wash the silt & seaweed out of his nets & go home empty handed. I understand empty nets...it's every flop, failure & fiasco. Every empty net is an accusation against my competence. Every empty net is a sign of my failure. Every empty net tells me I'm not quite the man I pretend to be...not quite as \_\_\_\_\_ as I want to be. Every empty net points an ugly finger...shame guilt sadness regret...lost opportunity...mistake or disastrous choice...

I know empty nets. You know empty nets...BUT there's a cure for empty nets & only 1: a call from Jesus to **go out where it is deeper, & let down your nets to catch some fish.** The cure for empty nets: Do what Jesus says & see what happens...that always means deeper water. A long time ago I heard someone **say**, There are no miracles in shallow water. So Simon gives Jesus all he has left...an expectation of more failure & a commitment to **obey**...*"Master, we worked hard all last night & didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."* *"If you say so."* Those four words changed Simon's life & they're enough to change yours, mine, Living Water's, this city & everything & everyone you know.

Let's be clear...this is **not** faith we hear in Simon. This is **not** "the assurance of things hoped for & conviction of things not seen." (Heb 11:1) It's reluctant obedience...at best. Simon would rather Jesus get out of his boat so he can go home, drink the last beer in the fridge & tomorrow think of a way to catch fish & pay his bills <sup>b/4</sup> his wife throws him out of the bedroom. *"If you say so."* is **NOT** the utterance of a faith-convicted man. But it **IS** a step toward obedience which puts Simon/you/me in the boat w/ Jesus who wants to pour his grace so deeply & abundantly into our lives that our deepest desires, our highest longings, & our wildest hopes are realized through Jesus & only through Jesus. Jesus steps into our lives when we are bone-weary, stuck, empty, frustrated, restless, & disappointed & rather than let us take our nets & go home says "Venture deeper in trusting me, go farther in responding to me, step beyond where you think is reasonable in obeying me & the grace that results is abundantly limitless."

When all Simon does is what he's done (shallow water, safe, comfortable, what he likes, enjoys, prefers)...the nets stay empty. But when Simon releases his life into Jesus' hands the nets are so full the boats start to sink. When all you rely on is all you rely on...the nets stay empty. But when we release our lives to Jesus...When we give up our tired same old same old...for deeper water where Jesus leads, Jesus replaces empty nets w/ an abundant full to overflowing life. Jesus takes Simon's frustration & futility & in their place give him joy & love that never end. Jesus takes Simon & through his reluctant obedience builds his church...manifests his life in his body...

EACH ONE OF US. That is precisely what Jesus seeks in us...to take our fear frustration futility faltering failing flailing & in their place plant love life joy peace strength, compassion, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, hope, healing, & a word to speak into the lives that cross our paths every day. Trusting Jesus in deep water is always a place of transformation, of new life & abundance beyond mere quantity.

Here's the part I love...**go out where it is deeper, & let down your nets to catch some fish.** Jesus commits to Simon that in obedience there **IS** a result. Jesus doesn't say "try," "might" or "maybe." Literally it reads, **"Let down your nets for a catch."** *If you say so...thy will be done* is the **only path** to complete joy, absolute contentment, unshakable peace & ultimate victory. If we are unwilling to do the ridiculous, we may never see the miraculous. Simon had 1000 excuses to say "No" & just go home. But in *"if you say so I will"* the nets fill to their breaking point & the boats fill to sinking.

Simon still tries to get out of the boat...confess his unworthiness & maybe Jesus will leave him alone...How did Jesus answer...**"Don't be afraid...from now on you'll be (fishing for) catching people."** And Simon leaves the bursting nets behind because there's nothing there that reaches as deep or promises as much...nothing is as soul satisfying as offering to the world what he has just been given in Jesus. In dragging the net of God's love through the deep water, rough seas, & dangerous storms of this world hoping for nothing less than an abundant catch is how we live our "why." That's how we live & experience in full what we were created & called by God to be. That's where Jesus works miracles. That's where Jesus works through us...

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*As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...*

#### **TAKE IT HOME**

Where in your life is Jesus calling you to "go out where it is deeper"?

What do you need to be able to say, "Master, if you say so, I will..."?

*(Be specific...where is Jesus calling you? What do you need to do that?)*