

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
06-02-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 6:1-8(9-13) Isaiah commissioned by God and the seraphs

Psalms 138 Give thanks to the Lord, It is the Lord who saves

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul's teaching on the resurrection of Christ

Luke 5:1-11 The miraculous catch and Jesus calls his first disciples

Introduction

The first and last reading of the bible that we have had today are about God's call on the lives of God's people, to share the "Good News" of God with others. As Jesus puts it when he is talking to Peter, he says :-

"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

Today I would like to look at what it means for us to be called by God, and how each and everyone of us, if we have accepted Jesus into our lives, is called by God.

But, I'd like to begin by taking a step back, and look at what is behind this "Good News", what is it, that we are called to share with others?

What For? – What is the Good News?

Today we have a great summary by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians of what the "Good News" we have is:-

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ²through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.
(1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

What is it for? So we can be saved!! But if you talk to someone who doesn't know about Christianity, being "saved" is odd language.

Being "saved" simply means being in a right relationship with God. Whether we realize it or not, we all need God. As human beings we are created by God, to be in a relationship with God.

And how do we get into this right relationship with God? How does this happen? As Christians, we believe it is not by what we do initially, but by accepting what Jesus has done for us, in his death and resurrection, and then following the call of God on our lives.

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Notice Paul says it is of first importance.

And how do we know about this? It has been handed down to us by those who experienced Jesus in their lives. It has been recorded in history.

This “Good News” has been passed on to us by real people who experienced the events of Jesus’ life, in their own lives.

Jesus made big claims about himself, and they believed them.

It gave them a peace they hadn’t known before. It filled their lives with meaning and purpose. It emboldened and enabled them to share the story of Jesus with others.

From the very first believers we can know that the “Good News” is “Good”, and it is for everybody.

Catching People

And Jesus wanted to let his disciples know that this “Good News” is for sharing. When Jesus calls his first followers, he says they will be catching people!!

We can all fall into the trap of thinking it’s not for us. We can all be reluctant.

We just have to listen to the words of Isaiah, Peter and Paul to be reminded of this:-

Isaiah - ⁵And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Peter - ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

Paul - ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

What is it that makes us reluctant? We may need to overcome fears and challenges in our lives to take our part, but God will provide the wisdom and strength for us, if we trust God.

We see with the prophet Isaiah, that he was initially reluctant to heed God's call, but then we hear how he devoted his life to sharing the message God had entrusted him with for the people of Israel:-

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah then says - "Here am I; send me!"

In the case of Peter, he knew of his own imperfections, but Jesus said to Peter, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

On hearing these words, Peter left his boat and followed Jesus.

Paul knew he had initially persecuted the first Christians. But after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, he turned his life around. We hear these words from him today ⁸"Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ... ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am"

We know Paul became an Apostle, he shared the "Good News" with the Gentiles and authored much of the New Testament.

This call meant something for Isaiah, Peter and Paul.
We too are called in many and various ways.

I recall being very nervous about letting others know I was a Christian when I was a teenager. It took time walking with God to overcome this. We live in a society which views Christianity very suspiciously. But as Christians we need to know that we are all called by God to take our part in the building up of God's Kingdom. And we need to know that God will equip us as we seek to build up God's Kingdom.

How do we hear God's call on our lives?

We need to be attentive to God, if we are to discern God's call on our lives. Through prayer, through contemplating the words of Scripture, through worshipping and adoring God, and by actually just asking God, God will make it clearer for us. The more in tune we are with God, the more evident God's will for our lives will be.

I wanted to share a brief moment from this week about being in tune with God. Sometimes it's hard when you get back from holidays and I was certainly encouraged this week in my personal reading of John's Gospel.

What does God's call on our lives mean for us?

It means we will be taking our part in the life of the Christian community in which we belong. God's call can mean different things for different people. We can't all be preachers like Billy Graham, but we are all called to take our part in the life of God's people. Of course, people need to hear about Jesus, before they can accept Jesus, but sometimes the greatest witness is the way we live our lives. If people see you, do they see an attractiveness about the way you live that would draw them to Jesus?

Conclusion

Jesus is Good News. We should be excited about it!
And the Good News of Jesus is meant to be shared.
We all have various challenges we may need to overcome, some may be more reluctant than others, but God has a part for each of us to play in the building up of God's Kingdom here in this place.

The Christian faith involves a decision to accept Jesus, but is not limited to that. The Christian faith also involves following Jesus, and taking our part in actually sharing this Good News with others.

How will you be taking your part this week?