

Notes on Luke 5 : 1 – 11; Galatians 5 : 16 – 18, 22 – 26
'Looking ahead – Looking to be like Jesus'

Do you remember that moment of sudden attraction when your pulse climbs, you have butterflies in your stomach, your heart is in your mouth and you know life will never be the same again? I am speaking about the time when your child, or children, were born wasn't it? What did you think I was speaking of? All of the above describe Peter at the moment when he heard the voice of Jesus speaking his name and saying, 'Follow me'. From that moment on life was no longer the same, as life was now about Peter imitating Jesus in his life and living his new fishing purpose, that of fishing for people so that they may enter into the life of the Kingdom of God like him instead of fishing for fish to feed his family. Jesus knows your name and he is calling all of us to follow him, just like he called Peter. He is calling all of us the life of learning to be like Jesus and he does so because he loves each and every one of us with a love which is beyond description.

Peter's response to Jesus is therefore priceless. He says, 'Go away', but Jesus can be a bit deaf at times because he wants Peter to hear, to feel, to know the power of this life-changing voice in his life. Jesus is persistent in loving Peter because his desire is, is for Peter to be a man whose life is shaped and moulded by his knowing Jesus' life in him and by his learning to be more like Jesus, as this is what it means to be truly human. This does not mean that Peter won't make mistakes, since this is one of the ways in which we learn to love and be more like Jesus. This is the same for all who hear and respond to the voice of Jesus and he yearns to plant in us the tree like seed of his life that it may blossom and grow in us as we learn to live his life using our heart, our hands and head at home, school, college, work and church.

Do you remember your Infant school PE when you had to reach as high as a tree? I think this is a great picture of what a Holy Spirit filled life looks like and imagine the branches catching the wind and as revel the wind of the Spirit blowing through you. Galatians 5 throbs with the life and energy of the Spirit and we're like trees which are being nurtured, loved and tended so that we may bear much fruit. This is Jesus' intent and passion and it is to be ours too. For all of you who are gardeners, you know that life will grow in your garden unless, of course, you have ducks, like we do, who tend to eat anything and everything in sight!! But this vibrant and abundant life we find in our gardens needs tending, training and pruning if it is to be properly fruitful. In Galatians 5 verses 16 and 17 we have a picture of fruitfulness and what is necessary for this fruitfulness to reach its proper potential. The verses speak of our needing to make the right choices, of our learning the holy habits which we must keep, of the purpose which must shape our lives and the understanding that this does not happen automatically but must be lived intentionally.

The Holy Spirit desires us all to be fruitful in our lives which we saw in the colourful pictures painted by the children and by our big fingerprint tree too. Paul describes what the fruit of the Spirit are – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. These nine fruits describe what a truly full, a truly human, a truly amazing and a truly precious life looks like. Don't you want to

live a life like that because I know I do. The Weightwatchers programme of how to lose weight is built around three points and this is called the 'Triangle of Transformation'. Firstly, you have a goal to aspire to, then there is the company you keep when you meet together and finally, there are the practices you choose to do and which the group encourage you to keep and it is to be the same for us. We all have a goal as Christians which is to know Jesus and to become like him. We are to keep company whether it be as a church as a whole, or in a small group, or with friends or family that we may be encouraged and helped in the journey towards this goal. These different styles of community all contribute to us having different layers of friendship which are important if we are to be 'successful' in our following, loving and being like Jesus. Finally, our practices include worship, prayer, Bible, forgiveness, service, giving etc but all of them are different expressions of what Love looks like which is to be our aspiration, our heart, our soul and our life.

We are to reach up like a tree like the tree on the front cover of our Lent read 'God on Mute'. We will discover as we follow Pete Grieg through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and into Easter Sunday much of how God chooses to help us mature in our Christian character. He does not describe an easy path, in fact the path he describes only reflects our daily lives as it is always in the midst of our lives do we find God at work in us and the fruit he desires to grow there. In 'God on Mute' Pete says disarmingly that neither he nor his wife Sammy or their situation are anything special. But what he does say is, is that it is in the particular circumstances of their lives they have learnt to grow and mature in their knowing, loving and being fruitful in Jesus; may we do the same too.

Questions on Lk 5: 1–11; Gals 5: 22–26 'Looking ahead–Looking to be like Jesus'
18th February 2024'

1. What does it mean to you when I say that Jesus knows you and calls you by name?
2. What does it mean to you to imitate Jesus in your life day by day and what is the place, or importance of having his life living in you too?
3. Galatians 5 speaks of our lives being filled by the life and energy of the Spirit, what is your experience of this?
4. How do verses 16 and 17 describe the way in which the Spirit tends, trains and prunes our lives that they may be fruitful and what is the place of our making the right choices, our learning the holy habits and knowing the purpose which shapes our lives?
5. What do you think Andy means when he describes our living the nine fruit of the Spirit as being a truly human, amazing and precious life?
6. How does this then link to our Lent read and our journey through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday?