

Jesus calls the first disciples
Isaiah 6:18
Luke 5:1-11

Our first four weeks looking at Christ's identity and our identity in Christ have been revealing.

We began by realising that metaphor is necessary to reveal Jesus uniqueness. He is the Word. He is the light of the World.

Chris pointed out that as a boy of 12 Jesus was growing into his identity – He was found in His Father's house, but nevertheless was obedient as a child to his parents.

Terry shared with us that Jesus could be weary and exhausted; asleep in a boat in the storm, yet had the authority to calm the wind and waves. The created order obeying the Creator.

Last week Rogan explored how when Jesus returned to Nazareth he was rejected (he was only Joseph's son after all) and yet could walk through the angry mob intending to kill him.

As we go, we see glimpses of ordinary humanity recognisable to us all and flashes of divinity that set him apart.

This week the chance to see how an individual reacts when he encounters the human/divine Jesus and what it says about our identity in Christ.

To give ourselves a background we'll start with the Isaiah reading in the Old Testament.

Isaiah is experiencing a vision and it's too dramatic a picture to be overlooked by artists.



As he sees the Lord in glory and experiences the heavenly worship his first reaction is fear – he becomes aware he is not Holy as God is Holy.

Woe to me, I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.

(Other translations suggest Woe to me, **I am silent** for I am a man of unclean lips. In other words I cannot offer worship because of my sinfulness and thus I am doomed.)

Have you ever gone along to an event and discovered you didn't get the dress code? Everyone is smartly dressed and you are in your casual clothes. You feel awkward to say the least.

I once went to a Building Society Dinner and needed a dinner jacket. A colleague offered to lend me her husbands and at the last minute handed it over. It was

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a white dinner jacket. I was in a room of three hundred fellows in black dinner jackets and mine was white. Odd one out.

It's not the dress code Isaiah is worried about, it's his sinfulness in the presence of Almighty God and unsurprisingly for a prophet...someone who is to speak – it's the sinfulness of what he's said that brings him Woe.

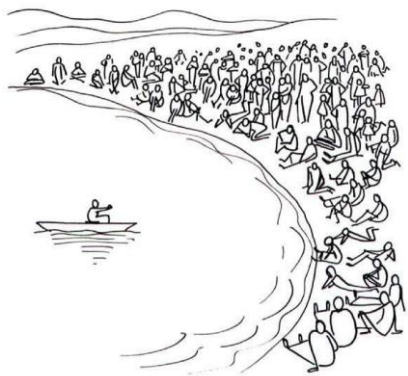
The vision continues and a Seraph flies to him with a burning coal taken from the altar. He touches his lips and says "see your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for"

Then when the Lord asks "Whom shall I send"?

Isaiah is able to reply, here I am, send me.

His response to God's holiness is to be aware of his own sin and need of forgiveness. Once provided, he is commissioned to go and speak.

So, to the scene by the lake and it must be something we have pictured in our minds when hearing this story – this image is from the Good News bible.



It is not the first encounter Simon has had with Jesus. At the end of the previous chapter Jesus has been teaching in the synagogue and heals a man of demon possession. Then it says...

Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

Simon has been around Jesus and seen first hand his authority over sickness and obviously begun to appreciate this was no ordinary rabbi. A relationship has begun.

I think Simon was a man of faith and longing. The desire of his heart was towards the right things. He wanted to see the Messiah come and God's Kingdom established and he has encountered this extra ordinary Rabbi. But despite his Mother-in-laws healing and the healing of many others...there hasn't been a personal response.

Then comes the sermon by the lake in the boat followed by the strange request to push into the deep and let down his nets and Simon goes along with it on the strength of all he's heard and seen to this point. But still no personal response.

Then there is a miraculous, net busting, boat sinking catch of fish.

At this, Simon becomes suddenly aware he is in the presence of Someone Other. Someone Unique. He gets a glimpse of the power and authority of Christ and his

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response is to recognise that this person is Holy and he is a sinner.

Simon has drawn close to Jesus, his preaching, the healings, his declaration of the kingdom and then suddenly he gets this glimpse of Jesus divinity and his response is fear and shame at his sinfulness.

We should never be surprised that those who are exploring faith and drawing nearer to Jesus might suddenly wish to turn away, drop out or make an excuse. Our sinfulness is laid bare when we encounter his holiness.

Yet in that moment Jesus reaches out to Simon. Both re-assuring him and commissioning him.

Do not be afraid...from now on you will fish for people.

In the story today we see Jesus humanity and divinity and we are getting used to that...but it reveals something of who we are in Christ.

Firstly, as we encounter him we become aware of guilt and sin yet even as we are doing so he reaches out to us. Don't be afraid. We are dependent upon him for forgiveness and he offers it to all who repent.

And in drawing close he points life in a new direction. For Simon it was to be a disciple and later an apostle. All of us are called to be disciples and then the specifics of our calling will follow. I believe all are called and all are equipped to serve Christ. We are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven...and given new purpose.

I don't believe God calls us and leaves it at that. I believe he is calling and guiding and leading us forward.

I'm a Vicar today and I anticipate that being my calling tomorrow and I've every confidence it will be here that I serve as a Vicar...but I don't want to be complacent. Those big jigsaw pieces might be settled in place, but in what other ways is Jesus calling me onward and forward. I have the suspicion it might be silence and prayer...we shall see.

If you allow yourself to draw close to Christ today...now in the moment...and hear his re-assuring "don't be afraid". What might his call to you be?

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Discipleship can only come from an encounter with Jesus and that encounter will be an experience of mixed emotions. Interest and intrigue drawing us in, fear and sinfulness pushing us away, Christ calling to us with an unbelievable challenge, the normality of life making a leap of faith seem bizarre.

How might we introduce Jesus to those who haven't encountered him?

Are we still following the call...or have we wearied and settled down comfortably?

How would you express your relationship to Jesus and what words describe it best? (Friend, Saviour, Lord, Master, Brother, King?)

As a disciple...what should we be paying attention to next in our relationship with Jesus?

What is the next step