

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Luke 5:1-11

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

5 Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'

11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

The call of Peter

Luke 5:1-11

The call of Peter.

Well actually the call of Simon.

If we ever come face to face with Jesus we do usually find that something changes dramatically. Not necessarily that we end up with a different name, that would probably be the least of it! I don't know what my life would look like if I hadn't followed Jesus, but I'm certain it would have been very different. The point at which Jesus commandeered Simon's boat for a purpose other than fishing, was the point where Jesus really began to make waves (sorry!). He asks Simon for help because he knows the boat will drift around, and so he needs Simon's rowing skills to keep it steady. So if we're asked to do something it could be an indication that God is calling us into a particular role.

Because the land sloped upwards from the lake, if you got in a boat and pushed out a few yards, you could speak and be heard clearly because there was a natural auditorium and your voice bounced off the water. And a new form of fishing was invented, fishing for people. But Jesus didn't stop at preaching.

Here's what happened next. (Video from the Chosen S1 E4)

Jesus spoke more about money than he did about prayer. What does this tell us? In the Greek world of the first century, matter was regarded as evil and spirit was seen as good.

But the Old and New Testament prophets all said that spirit can be evil *or* good, and material things can be a blessing *or* a curse. God created the world and it was good. Yes, of course *things* and money can be a reason for bad behaviour, and corruption but that's a result of people's choices.

When the Word of God became a baby, to quote the theologian Kenneth Bailey, 'matter was demonstrated to be worthy of communicating and receiving the fullness of God'. Unity of the flesh and the spirit was central to Jesus' message, and it's a crucial thing to understand, that all of us are a combination of mind, body and spirit, and God will bring all three into balance as he (eventually) heals us and makes us whole.

It's an astonishing nature miracle that's central to the calling of the man Jesus identifies as the future leader of the church. [The scene from *The Chosen* for me brilliantly captures the][Imagine the] absolute joy of that moment – miracles like that must have been great fun to witness; even the dog is amazed! What's more, Jesus is not in the synagogue, he's in Simon's place of work and being pursued by people wanting to hear his message. The word of God is taken out to where the people live and work and not kept within the walls of the synagogue as some airy fairy religious concept. Even today we can't afford to wait for people to come to us, we have to take the message out. So Simon's life is changed for the better. If you look at chapter 4, Jesus has actually only *just* healed Simon's mother-in-law,

but I think maybe Simon was out all night fishing and missed that one!

You might be thinking that in the film it was too close to the shore to catch so many fish. but people with knowledge of the lake will tell you that Galilee drops off into deep water close to the shore, so casting can even be done standing in the water. Most fish are caught near the shore although mostly at night, so Simon although he's initially highly sceptical of being told how to do his job by a carpenter, really is able to appreciate the amazing nature of the miracle. His eyes are finally opened as to who Jesus is, the lamb of God, the Messiah as his brother Andrew has told him (John 1). As I said God's desire is to make us whole and so Jesus healing miracles are signs that that's what's happening. Our bodies ultimately die but the bigger picture is that Simon is being made whole as a person. He recognises his need. We see another meeting on the shore of Galilee at the end of John's gospel when Jesus is risen. He looks different and is changed, and Peter is already becoming a much stronger person, healed in mind body and spirit. The fisherman has become a fisher of people. Jesus asks him three times, do you love me? If you do, then take care of my sheep. We're called to do the same, sometimes just where we are, sometimes somewhere very different. But you have to say, Simon's boat full of fish all died and got eaten. For Jesus's fish - that's you and me – it's a very different story! Amen.