

## **Remembrance Sunday 2024**

### **A Sermon on Mark 1.14-20**

**By Rev. Jackie Bullen, Vicar**

In the name of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

As I sat thinking about our Gospel reading for today, I was also thinking about my Grandfather because today is Remembrance Sunday and my Granddad, Fred, fought in the first world war.

He was just 18 when war broke out.

My Granddad came back from the 'Great War' as it was called and settled back into civilian life working on the railway, married and had a family.

He was a lovely man and he loved to tell a tale.

He loved to have people paying attention to what he had to say and listening to his stories.

He loved to make people laugh.

And for that reason he chose the tales he told very carefully.

He, like thousands of other people who have seen war up close never spoke of what happened on the battlefield or in the trenches.

If asked about those times he would either walk away or change the subject but, when he was in the right frame of mind, there was no stopping him telling his tall tales about the antics he and his friends got up to when on leave or during their rest times.

He boasted about the money he won playing cards and the silly tricks he played on other young men.

He spoke fondly of the friends he made and the way they supported one another.

My Granddad Fred chose the stories he shared carefully because he wanted them to have a positive effect on the listeners.

You may be wondering what this has to do with the gospel.

In our Gospel, we hear 'As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake' he then said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.'

Shortly after, he did the same with James and John, and the four of them immediately followed him.

There wasn't a long conversation about the whys and wherefores, they simply stopped what they were doing and followed Him. It is possible that they may have heard Jesus when he spoke in their hometown, but there is no indication that they had previously had conversations with him.

As fishermen, they would have put a considerable amount of time and effort into learning their craft, and it's not as though they were poor needy men, a fisherman would have been someone who would have had a comfortable lifestyle, and so there must have been something to draw them away from their work.

But nevertheless, they stopped what they were doing, and answered Jesus' call to follow him. They would have had no idea of what they were going to experience while they walked with Him in his earthly ministry, nor would they have conceived of how important the part they would play post Ascension would be in the course of human history.

There was never any mention of the lives that they left behind, their families, friends, livelihoods, in fact everything they had ever known. Their story became entwined with Christ's, and each other's, as they saw the birth of the early church.

Their story focussed on looking forward. They faced each new day as it came, and dealt with whatever was presented to them, whether good or bad. Sometimes with Jesus or the other disciples or followers with them, but equally in the later years on their own.

Their journey began with a simple invitation 'follow me'.

What they showed was faith in its most beautiful and simplest form, they trusted the invitation and they said 'yes'. It's not the only place where we have heard this, and in a matter of weeks we will hear of how a young girl said her 'yes' and how it set off a course of events that changed the world.

These events remind us that there is a shape, a plan that was formed so long ago, and each day since has added to the beauty of it. From the day that Jesus called his disciples, the first threads were added to a tapestry, and everyday since, that tapestry has had more and more strands added to it as each and every one of us brought our own unique story to the community of faith.

This passage assigned to this Sunday in the church year at the beginning of a time which is called kingdom season, reminds us that each of us is part of the kingdom of God and each of us has a story to tell.

I wonder, as we look around at the people who are in our churches, how many of their stories do we know. Do we know how our friends came to faith, did they have a moment when they chose to follow Christ or did their faith develop slowly over some time?

I'm sure some of you will know lots of other people's stories, but I would hazard a guess that amongst our brothers and sisters there are many stories that haven't been told, and deserve to be told.

You see in addition to taking time to study the scriptures, spending time with our Lord in prayer, gathering for worship and fellowship, there is also a huge amount of value in not only listening to one another. A great treasure trove of encouragement that we can give by telling our story. Talking about what led us to faith, what inspires us, and what keeps the fire of faith burning in our hearts and souls.

Understanding the lives of the saints, and those in the early church bring us back to their stories, but the tapestry never stopped growing and continues to do so today.

I know many are afraid of sharing why their faith is so important to them, and whilst this may seem to be of little significance, to think in those terms creates a disservice, not only to God, but just as importantly to themselves, because it is like saying my voice, my life, my experience doesn't deserve or need to be heard.

In a world of change, and for many, uncertain times, we as people of faith, have the opportunity to be a clarion voice, to give those who are searching a different option to a consumerist diet which promises much, but in reality, gives little by way of satisfaction, and leaves them thirsty.

We, and I do mean every one of us, can open a door and give them the opportunity to explore what faith could mean to them, and to find the water that quenches their thirst fully.

The disciples, the apostles, the early church, all knew that the stories of Jesus, their stories and experiences all had to be shared, and because they stepped out in boldness, even though they were likely nervous, a church was born, a church that has stood the test of time, and continues to inspire and encourage people each and every day.

I pray that like my Granddad Fred we will be bold to share our stories.

That we will have the wisdom to share our stories carefully.

That our stories will be heard and have a positive effect on other people.

After all, we have the greatest story ever told to share.

Amen.