**New Kilpatrick**

**6th February 2022**

**Luke 5:1-11**

**Gathering**

The light and the lake

Touch

In a thousand silver ripples

The boat has lingered here

Since long before the light came

Bereft of success

The cover of darkness has not hid them

And now dawn has struck

The silver darlings have gone

But the other side

The unfamiliar side

The alternative side

That side

Let the moribund nets slide

And within a length of seconds

As deep as eternity

The nets are alive again

Bouncing in the water

Flashing with silver light

Rippled with green and blue and yellow and gold

As the harvest struggles with abundance

And the story begins

**Welcome**

Hello. I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for the invitation to travel with you today.

We’re by the waterside today, that liminal place between two different worlds, the unknown sea, full of leviathan and mystery, and the land, the dust of which we are made, but in liminal places, where two words touch, unusual things can happen.

It is where we find Jesus, a carpenter, who works from produce of the land, and fisherfolk, who live by the fruit of the sea, cross paths, on the edge of two worlds and begin something new, a movement, of the kingdom of heaven, among the kingdoms of the earth.

And so you are invited, to come alongside, lay down the old world traditions, and join the movement of the new world ideas. The kingdom, is arriving.

**Story (retelling)**

*The Bible can be quite polite in the way it tells a story. Here’s a reimagined version of Luke 5:1-11*

Jesus had left the synagogue to those who liked synagogue. He didn’t fit in there. The open, wilder places felt more in keeping with the kingdom of God teaching, out here where people were met rather than in the limited places of tradition and familiar faces. Out here anything could happen.

In this natural temple of the world, holy space was everywhere, even here on the shore of Lake Gennesaret. There were always far more people now, trying to barge closer to hear him. It was a struggle on the shore. He was being backed into the water.

But then he noticed two boats, empty of fisherfolk who were along the shore scrubbing nets.

He pointed to the boats as if to ask can I use one of them? Simon, whose boat he had unceremoniously clambered into, being a carpenter Jesus knew how to build the boat, not climb into it, ran over and helped him move out from the shore a little.

Sitting there Jesus taught the crowd and Simon listened. Once he had finished, Jesus suggested to Simon to push out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.

The fisher looked at the carpenter. "Oh you think we should put out again? Well, we WERE just out all night and caught nothing, but what do I know, it's not like I've spent my whole adult life fishing or anything…”

Jesus listened to him, the frustrations of a whole system of fishing where boats now had to be leased, from wealthier owners who were moving into the new city being built along the shore called Tiberius, and how the long tradition of fishing families was being set asunder by new rules and legislation that made them poorer as their non-fishing owners filled their pockets more. Perhaps Jesus one of the carpenters helping to build that city, Simon didn’t know but he had been made restless having just heard what Jesus had taught about this new kingdom, and his own situation of being tied up in an unbalanced and unfair system.

However, out into deeper waters they went and the net went overboard. And no sooner had it hit the water than it was full of fish, every kind, from the smallest minnow to bigger expensive fish. What kind of miracle was this? What hocus pocus Messiah was sitting in his boat? If you want a miracle, why not heal someone, or bring down tyrants, rather than fill a fishing net.

But Simon, saw something more here, a symbol, a picture of what Jesus had been teaching about earlier, an invitation that Jesus word was shaping a movement, not to simply fill nets by magic, but a sign of things to come, a net that gathered all the least in the world, caught in an unjust system, now being invited to be caught up in a movement that was fairer, more honest, and life-giving.

And Jesus said to him, or at least Simon things he remembers Jesus asking him, but he really can’t remember, “Will you join this movement, and catch the world?” Whether Jesus asked, or Simon just heard what he wanted to hear, he replied, immediately, “Yes!”

**Prayer**

Loving God

On the edge of things

The liminal places

Between one time and another

One feeling and another

One era and another

One state of being and another

May we gather

Here

This liminal place

Between heaven and earth

Between past and future

May we be here

Present to the possibilities

That this place offers

The creativity that comes

By way of tangling things together

And find your word spoken

And your dream enfleshed

And your hope realised

Loving God

In this thin place

Holy and full of potential

May we bring all we are

All our pasts

The hurts and the hinderances

We have been in the world

And caused to others

And let them reform

Into hope

And grace

And generosity

And we might hear again

Your story for the first time

In a new way

Bring to life what has been moribund in us

And kindle a hope again

And make possible

The birthing of the kingdom

Whenever we are

Between places

On the edge of things

Unsure of futures

Anxious about now

May we let that kingdom

Guide us

Reshape us

Forgive us

Renew us

So be it

Hear us as we share the global prayer together

Our Father, who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Reflection**

I know folk don’t want to look towards politics for many examples of integrity at the moment. There is a very selfish version of leadership going on that measures success as being able to scrape through. But there are not many heads being held high.

Generally we want folk of integrity to lead us, who have decent standards, not perfection, but who reach a certain standard of decency and honesty.

So perhaps it will be a surprise to hear I’d like to reduce the entry level for faith and particularly Christianity.

We have a version of church, and this is across most of our denominations, that seems to expect us to be at a decent level of lifestyle and understanding to join. I’ve told you the story before of one minister of the Church of Scotland, newly moved to a parish, intimating communion will be shared in a fortnight.

He (and it was only a he in those days) visited a few families in order to give them their communion token. Yes, these were the days when you needed to be judged to be at a certain level of decency before you were allowed anywhere near the table, but he found them all to be wanting.

He announced the next week that communion would be postponed until he had visited every family and instructed them in the faith and judge them worth to receive the bread and wine.

Two and a half years later, communion was finally served.

Since the age of the enlightenment, 500 years ago, faith feels like it is about rationality, understanding. What does this mean? Do you understand the creeds? Do you know the catechism?

Being a bear of little brain (as Winnie the Pooh says), I’d rather ask people how many stories they can remember about Jesus, where do you find yourself in them, how do you hear Jesus words to the prodigal, the samaritan, the tax collector, the woman at the well?

We still speak of catechisms and doctrines and creeds. I genuinely can’t imagine God is the least bit concerned about that. Personally, I find some of it fascinating, and these serve as a corrective, I love the nuances and the double meanings of words and the social backgrounds that enlighten stories, but faith is a movement, and this story of the call of the disciples, shows us that exactly.

When Jesus calls the fisherfolk, he was not reeling them in one by one in a membership drive. It doesn’t seem Jesus was trying to get any new followers for any church. As we know, Jesus never showed any interest in starting a church. Jesus was starting a movement.

Rather, he was shaping a great project to  ***re***-shaped how we all lived in the world, establishing right relationships with our neighbours and rebalance the world away from the powerful, the dishonest, the oppressors. He didn’t quite get there, that is what we are all about. We are still that movement.

So let us reimagine the church and not talk of it as something that requires membership and baptism being the sign of that membership but talk of it as a project, an operation, an enterprise, to change the way we live towards each other.

We start, not with understanding doctrine and creeds we start with a movement that desires justice and grace and love before anything else. And until ‘we get’ these, everything else is less important. Let us live the stories we have in the bible which we give to every baptised person to read and reread . They are the foundations of this movement called the kingdom, the one Jesus called the fisherfolk to be part of.

And here in this place our reimagining of that moment as we grow out of the pandemic is to take these stories we are baptised into Ours is to live these stories, be these stories, enflesh these stories, here. Hear the call Jesus offers to be the movement of the kingdom, fishers, all, and in our living, reshape our community, parish and relationships wherever we find ourselves.

**Prayers for others**

God of love

Our prayer is a simple one

To love the world

To let the world be reshaped by love

Rebalanced by justice

Renewed by peace

And as we renew our call to your kingdom movement

May we live this prayer

Be the flesh on these words

The breath in their lungs

Enough to see the way faith

Any faith

Can renew the world

So hear us

As we gather here

Ukraine and Yemen

Syria and Afghanistan

Mali and Burkino Faso

Hear us as we gather here

Parliament and investigations

Leadership and honesty

Hear us as we gather here

The least in our communities

The support for the poorest

In fuel poverty

Fragile businesses

With new taxes

Hear us as we gather here

Our own community and parish

Our neighbourhoods and our neighbours

Hear us as we gather here

Our families and friends

Those who are ill and hurting

Those mentally ill and exhausted

Those worried and isolating

And as we gather them all

May they be gathered into this movement of love

The kingdom of light

The word of hope

The carpenter that wills to rebuild our relationships

Our politics

Our neighbourhoods

Our lives

And follow you

Into that reimagined

And resurrected world

So be it, Amen

**Epilogue**

A couple of weeks ago, if you remember, Jesus was in the synagogue. He chose a passage from Isaiah: good news to the poor, freedom for the oppressed, liberty to the captives and the blind given sight.

The only thing was that, local boy (for it was his own synagogue, the one he grew up in where he knew everyone, these adults who had watched him grow and loved him into faith), local boy didn’t make good and he was thrown out the synagogue.

And hardly a paragraph later in the story, here is Jesus, taking a boat out into the water and preaching to crowds.

There is a beautiful enigmatic image here. It is as if Jesus has chosen his own holy ground. Here, outside in the open, on a lake and in a makeshift boat, where there are no rules and traditions and rituals and expectations, he finds the place to teach. This temporary space is where the kingdom will be invited.

The whole scenario reframes our thinking about how we share the stories of the kingdom, here within four walls, or the bigger spaces beyond us.

That isn’t trying to make any more of a point than inviting us, as we gather round the six principles we are using to reshape ourselves: welcome, creativity, family, relationships, wellbeing and communication, that the working out of them, takes us beyond the solid centres of the church, and into the temporary, makeshift places of our community. It is where Jesus found the space he needed for people to hear the kingdom of God, beyond the expected places, into new liminal places.

This continues to be an interesting, kingdom project.

**Benediction**