**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**30th July 2023**

**Matthew 4:18-22**

**Gathering**

Sometimes the words just don’t make sense.

The picture they offer is too big.

The idea too vast and unachievable

Sometimes the promise can’t be fulfilled.

The idea can’t be grasped.

Our experiences are too limited.

By culture, tradition, fear

So, what do we do?
how can we achieve greater things than we imagine?

How can the kingdom be known?

Touched?

Brought in?

We just can’t conceive of it.

That is why Jesus said,

Simply

Beautifully

Intentionally

Invitational

Let me show you,

‘Follow me’

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton… the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and thank you again that you have invited us into your space today that we might share a story together… one that seems so classical of the gospel… charged with questions we daren ’t ask… and over flowing with ifs and buts… and there is hardly a conversation going… just one sentence… follow me and we’ll catch people… ‘What!’… If nothing else, it is the beginning of an adventure… but it is also the start of the kingdom… so why not… let’s go, follow…

**Prayer**

Dare we follow, O God?
In all its riskiness,

Boldness,

Impulsive hazardousness?

It is not the shape of our conditioned

And well-worn faith.

Starting out again with an unknown adventure.

It the wrong time for us,

At our age!

Our condition!

Our present circumstances!

Yet:

Unsafe God,

Precarious Saviour,

Audacious Spirit,

Might we,

Dare we,

Take the chance?

Do you believe we will?

Is that *your* greatest risk?

Wow, God!

What confidence you have,

And how fragile your plan,

That we might follow.

Well,

Let us be those people,

And lay down the heavy inertia

Of fear,

Tradition,

Expectation,

Pre-emptive faith

And prescriptive belief,

Let it all go.

What a thrill!

And find ourselves on a beach.

What a wonder!

And an ebbing tide.

What a project!

And choose,

No…

Embrace.

No…

Suffuse ourselves.

In you,

And your dream,

And your way.

We say… yes,

To following.

Bring it on.

Let it be so for now.

So be it.

Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Introduction**

The boats are half empty… and any fish caught… goes to a middleman… The return is low… hardly worth going out sometimes… The whole culture has changed… You didn’t work for yourself any longer… but for the owner of your boat… and the taxman… There wasn’t the joy in it any more, knowing you were in debt to a bigger fish further up the line… And then the prophet is there on the beach… and without any conversation… introduction… or warning… offers an invitation… how do you hear it.. .and what do you do?…

**Scripture**

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

**Reflection**

Follow me… Follow me and I will make you fish for people…

How might those words have sounded on the upper shores of a loch-side in Galilee?…

How might those words with which we’ve decided to shape doctrine… claimed our own as a church… that have begun every mission plan… how might those words have begun a movement… way beyond the church… that is now called Christianity?…

Follow me…

To hear them… you have to be filled with trust… because the way you are following is unknown to everyone…

And they must have been heard with anticipation… some shift has begun in the kingdom of God… this preacher has decided to do something with his preaching… his healing… his argument with time… and its slowness to reform and renew… These are his affirming word that now is the time for something to happen… Follow me… We’re about to do something…

Who knows how the disciples heard the words, Follow Me… but the story is told how the almost threw away their nets… as if casting out a former life… The vision they had for large catches… and well-fed bellies… has suddenly been replaced… But by what… What did they see and trust and hope in now…

We do not know… Nothing is recorded… the story is even hardly a story… but a comment at the beginning of the whole journey…

But whatever power there was in those words… that shaped a vision where there hadn’t been one before… that set an adventure which they were willing to take… enough to call them out of one life into another… hardly feels enough when we read it in the cool… almost effortless terms in the gospel…

Where is the power of the visionary here… that can call up that deep longing and make urgent the next step we take… Where is the energy that sets fire to our souls, that shifts us from one path onto another without even a hesitation… Where is the charisma or even the warning that acknowledges this path is not going to be smooth…

Follow me…

It feels effortless… and hardly inspiring…

Jesus had been in the area some time… we know that… He was from Nazareth… yet now in Galilee… It was hardly his first day… He was a carpenter… A new city was being built called Tiberius… just along the shore… Capernaum… where he was staying… was the crossroads of cultures… Romans, Greeks, Jews and then some… It was a great mixing place of news… of trade… of ideas… That’s what happens when people come together… We talk… share thoughts… stories from faraway places… mix ideas…

It is here in this hubbub… in this place of fusion of information… Jesus begins… follow me… Empowered by the crisscross of ideas… the talk of Romans… the anger of the declining income of the fishers from the landed owners of their trade… the unsettled life so many had… the injustice of occupation… the taxing of the poor… fisherfolk who no longer could afford their boats… no longer supply a ready meal daily… and certainly with anything to spare…

And Jesus says… Follow me…

And might the fishers on that beach wonder what he was planning?… Might they wonder what it was they were going to be doing… In the middle of an unsettled time… in a village that was always unsettled with the different news that flowed through its streets… the exchange of ideas… the constant rise and fall of anger… what might be about to happen…

And he calls them… the first… the fisherfolk… whose livelihoods have been taken away… and whose worth was now least among so many… Follow me… It was like a call to justice… a call to the kingdom… a call for that longed for Day of the Lord… the time had come… the revolution was beginning… what he is calling them to do… because they would do it…

But, nothing…

There was doing exactly nothing…

There was no battle… no taking up arms… no violent protest… no calling down of angel armies… no revolution… no revolt… for the call was not to *DO* something… The call was to *BE* something… And if ever that was a question we were ever to ask…, what shall we be? … the answer… is every page following…

These are only the opening words of Jesus… the prologue… the headlines… the step for a hint… If we sense our own times… the uncertainty… the mix of news and politics… the crossing point of worlds… the change in worth and hope and trust… then our call is not to DO… but to BE… followers… BE disciples… who are learners… trusters… adventurers… questioners… confused sometimes… amazed at others… angry… hopeful… disappointed… thankful… changed…

In such a way… in such a pattern of following… surely… in being something in the world as followers… THERE is the change… the light… the hope… the good news… the opportunity… the death… and the resurrection… No-one can DO any of these things… but all of us can BE those things…

Let us go and BE the followers Jesus called us to be…

**News**

**Prayer for Others**

And as we step into the world, O Saviour

And follow you into the highways and byways of the world

May we pray

On the roads to Ukraine and Sudan

The fields of Yemen and Afghanistan

The public spaces of Syria and Haiti

May we pray alongside those we meet

Who show us the world from their place

May we pray

On the pavement sides of our old institutions

Of faith and healing

Of churches and NHS

And pray with those we encounter there

Who see from their place of need

May we pray

In the corridors of parliaments and politics

Ambitious for self or nation

And pray with those we meet there

From their burdens and fears, cynicism, and mistrust

And around the tables of our communities

Of neighbour and stranger

In the widening gap between us

And pray with those we are invited to join

Across the distance of our wealth, power, opportunity

And the longing to close it.

In the waiting rooms of the ill

Of mental and physical health

A national anxiety short of vision

And with those we wait alongside

Pray with each other.

And in the sitting rooms of our own homes

Of family and friend

And pray with those who pray for us

And find your meeting place between us.

As we step into the world

And follow you

Alongside the people we meet

Might we voice the prayer

We wish for each other.

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**