**Sermon for Sunday 1st May 2022**

by Haydon Wilcox

*A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, "I'm not going!"*

*"Why not?" asked his mother.*

*"I'll give you two good reasons," he said. "One, they don't like me. Two, I don't like them."*

*His mother replied, "I'll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you're 47 years old. Two, you're the Vicar!"*

I feel very privileged to have walked many times on that part of the lakeside where the risen Lord Jesus met his disciples, prepared them breakfast and reinstated Peter, after he’d denied knowing Jesus three times before his crucifixion

Today on that particular beach there is a wonderful statue of Jesus speaking to Peter and by it a beautiful little church made from the black volcanic rock that is everywhere in the Galilean region.  It’s often to this place that I take pilgrims and suggest that they choose a stone from the beach and remember the things that often separate them from God – it may be a concealed sin, a regret, a burden they carry.  Then I suggest they throw the stone into the sea with a true desire to bring those issues before God to ask for forgiveness and help.  Proceeding then into the church or into the grounds we have the opportunity for people to pray and to be anointed.

On that day when the risen Lord Jesus met his disciples, they were obviously troubled and confused.  Yes, they’d met our Lord in the upper room, but they had no idea or clarity about the future.

Peter says, ‘I am going fishing’.  It is said as if he needs to do something that at least, as a former fisherman, he knows what do to. Perhaps he wanted to just go alone but the others were equally keen to go with him.  These experienced fishermen caught nothing!  I often wonder how that deepened their lack of confidence. Even fishing was beyond them!  It’s true of course that often at the lowest points in our life God intervenes.

So, at the moment of the disciple’s apparent desperation and disappointment they see a fire on the beach.  A stranger’s voice beckons them to bring some of their fish and share breakfast with him.  But they hadn’t caught any fish, and then when they hauled the net it was now full of fish.  At this moment physically they didn’t recognise who this stranger was but, in their hearts, they knew it was Jesus.  That’s something we all need to remember sometimes we can’t explain or prove God is with us, but we just know it in our hearts.

One can only imagine what a joyful and wonderful breakfast that was – matching in part what we experience every month when St. Mark’s provides the breakfast feast that I know I, and I’m sure you all, so gratefully appreciate.

Jesus turns to Peter and now a very intimate exchange takes place. He asks Peter whether he love him and as quick as the question is asked Peter responds , ‘you know that I love you.’ Three times he’s asked and three times he replies, in a way that forgives the three times he denied Jesus in the courtyard of the High Priest’s House before the crucifixion.  After response Jesus commands him to feed his sheep or tend his lambs.  Then he said to Peter follow me.  Peter had to face what he’s done, and Jesus had to reinstate him, but he also needed to be commissioned.  Peter appears to be commissioned to do two things – to tend and to feed the Church or the flock. To tend means to pastorally care and to feed means to nurture – in his vocation to teach and preach the good news.

That vocation is the one all clergy today are called to.  To be pastors – to listen, to support, to heal, to pray with, visit, to console, to care, to counsel.  But as evangelists we need to proclaim the good news of Jesus and teach people the truths about God, especially those contained in scripture.  That’s why a Bishop has two significant badges of office – a bishop has a shepherd’s crook to remind everyone he’d a pastor and they wear a mitre that symbolic for it has two book marks hanging from the back to show that they are teachers of the Old Testament and the New Testament and the mitre is shaped as a flame because they are to preach the good news in the power of the Holy Spirit and bring people to faith in the risen Lord Jesus.

The clergy are not called to be administrators, dictators who are six foot above contradiction, nor are they called to be idle, to have a cushy ride.  They are not called to status or privilege, neither are they called because of their dynamic personalities, or to seek security.  They are called to feed and to tend in the power of the Spirit.

The amazing thing is that God is calling the most unlikely of candidates into the ministry – I know that because he called me.

He called Peter and many of the others who were simple fishermen – true working class, he called Matthew a collaborator with the enemy, he called Simon the Zealot who was a political activist, Judas who was deceitful and as we heard in the first reading any man called Saul who a pious religious man who wanted to eliminate the followers of Jesus.  These and countless men and women met the risen Jesus, and their lives were transformed.

They were transformed not by just meeting the risen Lord Jesus but by being changed by the Holy Spirit.

The same applies to us. We may be experiencing uncertain personal issues.  We may be sceptical or opposed to God.  We may have a history that we or others are shamed of. We may be the most unlikely of people to find God. But God wants each and every one of you and the is something special you have to do for him in this world.

That’s our mission at St. Mark’s not to keep the show on the road but to bring people to know and love Jesus.  It starts with feeding and tending, and it results in transformative surprise as we see the amazing things that God can do with ordinary lives. We sow the seeds and we water them, but God gives them life.