

Sermon on Mark 1:14-20
November 6th 2021
Right Time, Right Place

(At St Mary's, ask the children if they remember a song from when they were very young)

When I was four years old I started going to Sunday School and I especially remember some of the songs I learnt there. There was, *The wise man built his house upon the rock* – does anyone remember that one? Then there were a couple of others which in my mind both have the same tune, but I won't try to sing them. They went, *Read your bible, pray every day.....and I will make you fishers of men.....*

When I was a child, it was explained to me that this meant that the disciples would go on to tell people about Jesus and that they would catch other people to follow Jesus and become disciples. But I didn't really relate this to myself. I didn't think that this was something Jesus might want me to do. The picture in my head was of those fishermen to be honest. Maybe because of that phrase, I will make you fishers of men. Well, of course Jesus used that expression because He was talking to fishermen, he never used it again as far as we know. Jesus always related what He was talking about to the things that people knew and understood around them. For example, He talked about lamps, like this one, when He wanted people to understand that they should shine out with His love so that people could see, and not hide their light under a basket and pretend they didn't belong to Him. He talked about sowing and reaping, about weeds, sheep and goats, sweeping a house, ordinary things to help people to understand what sort of people we should be if we belong to Him. If He was on earth here and now, He would use different examples – things that we relate to. But going back to the idea of being fishers of men. When I decided, when I was 16, that I wanted to be a follower of Jesus, a disciple, I went on a

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course called friendship evangelism.

[Now I think there can be a lot of confusion between evangelism and evangelicalism. Evangelism just means telling others about Jesus and encouraging them to believe in Him and become Christians as well.

Evangelicalism is a movement amongst Christians that started around 300 years ago. Evangelical Christians believe that we become Christians and are brought into God's family by grace alone. We become Christians by believing in Jesus, believing that He died for us on the cross so that we could be forgiven for all the wrong things we have done. Sometimes they use the expression born again to describe this process. They believe that the bible is God's revelation to us, in other words that God uses the bible to speak to us, even today and they believe that all Christians should spread God's message of love and reconciliation through faith in Jesus – in other words, that all of us are called to be fishers of men. So, you can see how the confusion arises.

Anyway],

I went on this course, and I only really remember two things about it. A story about a man who thought that the best way to get people to follow Jesus was to sing hymns very loudly on the bus, on his way to work every morning. It was actually very annoying to most people on the bus, but the man carried on doing it until someone got so fed up with him that they punched him and gave him a black eye. The other thing I remember was being told that a much better idea was to be as kind and generous to everyone as you possibly could. They suggested doing things like baking a cake for a neighbour. Of course, you don't

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have to be a Christian to be kind and generous, but if you are kind and generous because you are a Christian and you want other people to know about Jesus' love, then His light will shine out of you and people will see it and come to know that you are friends of Jesus.

The other really important thing about our reading today is Jesus' timing. John the Baptist had been telling people about God's love and preparing them for Jesus' coming. When John the Baptist was put in prison, that was the time that Jesus took over started telling people that He had come to show them what God was like and how they could be friends with God again. Notice He said, "the time has come". And His timing is always perfect. He called Simon and Andrew and James and John at just the right time. We know from reading the accounts of this in the other Gospels, especially in Luke and John, that this might not have been the first time that these fishermen had heard of Jesus or heard Him speak. Either way, He came to them at just the right time and when He said, "follow me", they were ready to drop everything and go with Him. His timing is always perfect. He always calls people at just the right time and in the right place. He doesn't call all of us to drop everything and to travel around or go, as most of the first disciples did to different countries. Some of us are called to show Jesus love to other people right where we are. But He does call every one of us by our name at just the right time and every one of us, no matter how young or how old, is called to tell others about His love by shining like lights for Him wherever we are.