

8<sup>th</sup> February 2009 9.15am & 10.45am

All Saints', Ilkley

**“Called to use your Gifting”**

Luke 5: 4-11

If you were last Sunday evening you would have heard me tell of the man who woke in the night to find that burglars are breaking into his shed. Immediately he rings the police and tells them that his shed is being burgled. The police unfortunately say that there are no officers available to deal with it straight away but they'll send someone round later. The man puts the phone down and a minute later he rings back and says 'Don't worry about coming round later because I've shot the burglars dead' Within two minutes there are 6 squad cars at the door, a police helicopter in the sky and 2 firearms units on the scene – 2 minutes – when they go into the shed they find that the burglars are completely unharmed and they arrest them. The police, dumbfounded, say to the man 'I thought you said you'd shot them' to which the man replies 'I thought you said there was no-one available!'

Availability. Are you available? There is so much work to be done for God but often, seemingly, there is no-one available. But the truth is we believe in a God who always provides enough people and enough gifting – and the good news is – you are it. Each of you has been given gifts for the work of the kingdom and you are called by God to make them available. This morning we are looking at being called to use your gifting.

The Bible lists a number of gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to God's people—perhaps as many as 30. They run all the way from preaching and teaching God's Word to music, hospitality, administration, service, prophecy, evangelism and encouraging others. We don't all have the same gift, and we shouldn't envy someone who has different gifts from us. The Bible says, *"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us"* (Romans 12:6).

You have gifts from God in order that you can be a gift to others – (picture)

One of the texts I want to look at is Luke 5: 4-11 and it has something to say about disciples using their gifting. Let's have a look at the text:-

*“When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”*

The first thing that I want to say about this scripture is that it says when it comes to gifting a disciple needs to realise their potential.

**1. Realise your potential** – you have been given a gift and you are called to recognise it and make it available for use in the kingdom – to realise your potential. Simon was a fisherman, that was his trade, but God had given him a spiritual gift that had not yet been realised. In this scripture Jesus said, v 4, let down your nets for a catch – Jesus is saying there's plenty of fish out there – this was a real thing that happened but Jesus was using it as a metaphor to help Simon realise his potential. Simon had been given a gift of evangelism, not yet realised, but he'd been given it. And Jesus paints this picture of what Simon can do – Simon let's down his nets and catches a massive haul of fish so big that their nets are breaking – then Jesus says to Simon, v 10, *“...from now on you will catch men”* And Peter gets it, he catches this big

vision, he begins to realise that he has been given a gift from God, not to fish, but to catch people for the kingdom – a gift of evangelism – and we know in Acts 2 that 3,000 men were ‘caught’ for Christ by Peter on the day of Pentecost. A third of the world is today Christian as a result of Peter’s realisation of his gifting. You too have been given a gift from God.

So first of all we need to accept that Jesus has given you a gift – realise your potential. Some of you here today will have gifts of evangelism, some of teaching, some of service, some healing, wisdom, some prophecy and many others – each of us have been given at least one gift to help serve God. We’ll look later at how to recognise what that gift may be.

**2. Don’t let your past dictate your future** –Liz and I went to see James Blunt the singer last year and one of the lines of one of his songs says this “*give me reason but don’t give me choice because I’ll just make the same mistake again*” Many of us think the same way – we go through life making the same old mistakes – a pattern of history repeating itself – the past dictating the future. Verse 5 Jesus says ‘*Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.*’ Simon answered, ‘*Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything....*” Essentially Peter is saying I haven’t been very successful to date so I’m not very optimistic about the future.” And some of you here today may be thinking the same thing. I’ve tried things in the past and it hasn’t worked – I’ll only make the same mistakes again. God hasn’t really used me before so why should he now. I haven’t done a great deal for God so far so it’s unlikely He’ll do anything now. Some of you may be thinking that you have failed at many things so why would God want to use you. It’s important that you don’t think that way – it’s important that you don’t let your past dictate your future, it’s important that you believe what Jesus says – Jesus says to Peter “put your nets out” and even though it goes against the grain and even though they’d just failed on their last fishing trip – they do what Jesus asks – “...*because you say so I will let down the nets*” and of course the result as we’ve already seen is this massive catch of fish. If Peter had listened to his past he would have done nothing, instead he listens to Jesus and does something significant. Jesus says to you – you have been given a gift and you are called to use it.

Now it may take some time for your gift to be fulfilled so don’t be discouraged –Abraham had to wait until he was a geriatric, Moses had to wait for 40 years, Joseph had to wait in prison until his gift was fully realised. You are called to use your gifting.

**3. We are called to use our gifts together.** You can have the most gifted preacher, the most gifted evangelist, the most gifted prophet, but used in isolation they are of little intrinsic value. Paul uses the image of the body with its different components, legs, eyes, feet, stomach all coming together to make the whole – the Bible tells us this “*You are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it*” 1 Cor 12: 27 You and your gifting have a part to play. All the individual gifts we are given compliment each other in order to make the whole. In the scripture as this massive catch of fish is being hauled aboard we read that Peter on his own, in isolation, is unable to land the catch “...*they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them....*” They were in partnership, they did it together. Without this working together the catch would have been lost. And it’s the same with your gifting. If you refuse to use your gift, if you refuse to explore what your gifting might be, the work of God is thwarted. It’s only when a church has all its members knowing their gifting and exercising it that a mighty power is released. You are called to use your gifting.

So the question this raises is this? How do you find out what your gifting is? Well some of you will already know and be using it, some of you will know what your gifting is or have an idea but feel that you’re not being used – if that’s you for goodness sake come and talk to me, talk to Carole or the wardens and say look I want to have an opportunity to do this or that or whatever. But what about everyone else? How do you find out what your gifting is? Well I can’t give you a definitive answer in the last two minutes but I can offer three things.

**First.** Pray. Ask God to show you what gift (or gifts) He has given you. Then prayerfully look at yourself. What can you do that others find difficult, or don’t want to do? What do others say about your abilities? Try doing different things in church—things that will stretch you and help you see where you are especially helpful. Use this list of the gifts of the Spirit to see if any resonate with you (give out list)

**Second.** Be willing to try anything. If one of the leaders of the church suggests you may want to explore some work in the church be willing to give it a go and see if it’s for you.

**Third.** Ask someone you trust to share what they think your gifting might be.