

St. Paul's Small Groups. April 13th 2008

Easter People: Being with Jesus John 21:1-14

Word:Key points from Sunday's sermon

Many of us have heard of the television programme "the Apprentice". Contestants aspire to following Sir Alan Sugar's style of leadership – much of which is concerned with the competition of getting as much money as possible. Failure is not an acceptable outcome or option. Contrast that with the scene set before us on the shores of Galilee as the disciples or apprentices meet with the risen Jesus, their leader. We see an example of the excellence of Jesus' leadership. We, like the disciples, are called to be apprentices, not of Sir Alan but of Jesus Christ. We are not called to compete with each other but to follow and to lead and help others to follow Jesus.

In this scene 7 of the disciples have gone back to their old craft of fishing, turning their backs now on the events in Jerusalem and returning to something they knew all about, something familiar, something that felt safe perhaps...they fish all night but in the morning their mission has been a total failure! Perhaps they have still to learn to truth of Jesus' words "Apart from me you can do nothing"... Suddenly on the shoreline a voice calls out "Cast your net on the other side". Still not recognising Jesus they cast their net on the other side of the boat and suddenly the net is filled to the brim with 153 fish! At this moment the disciple whom Jesus loved at once proclaims "it is the Lord". What made him realise this I wonder? Perhaps they were reminded of their original call from the Lord when they were told by Jesus "I will make you fishers of men". In a sense this miracle of the 153 fish spiritually symbolizes this missionary call of Jesus to his disciples. When the disciples get to the shore they find a meal of fish and bread prepared for them. Jesus calls them to sit and eat with him; with echoes of the Eucharist, Jesus takes and gives them bread and fish. They dare not ask or search Jesus about this. I think they know that the great I AM is sitting with them – the risen Lord...

Think about Jesus' leadership. Surely it is His love which under girds His patient and persistent calling of the disciples to leave their old lives behind them and to head towards higher objectives and standards. As we look back through the gospels we see some key aspects of Jesus' leadership style...it is **restorative, meeting people where they are, sustaining (acknowledging the need for physical sustenance), serving, and relational** – he eats with them – joins in. Was there was much conversation between Jesus and the disciples when they ate on the shore? We do not know exactly from the gospel. Either way the disciples must have been reminded not only of their first calling they had received from Jesus to follow me but also of the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. For it was here in Galilee on the shores of the lake of Tiberius that Jesus had performed this miracle. Peter too might have been reminded of his denial of Jesus, as the smell of the burning charcoal on the beach echoed that of the fire had had stood by in denial. In typical style Jesus comes alongside his followers, meeting them at work while they fish, meeting their physical needs by providing food. Jesus is gentle in His leadership – he comes alongside – he does not do so in order to rub their noses in it or to point out their failures but he chooses His moment...and His place in which to remind His followers of their higher calling. He need not point out their weaknesses but He sets a scene in which the disciples can learn and grow – Jesus meets the whole person. Perhaps he doesn't even need to use words – there may be a knowing silence, either way there is a sense of a conversation which goes something like "well this is where it all started my friends – now can you keep on track and take up the call I have set before you?" Jesus' ministry is alongside; today we have the Holy Spirit alongside, within us, reminding us of the Church's central calling to be fishers of men...

We can fish all we like in the real world but without listening to and obeying Jesus, we do so in vain. We can go for years with our nets on the wrong side of the boat but when we meet Jesus and listen to Him, when we are with Him, we cast our net under His direction and guidance and suddenly find that they are full! So what of the Church? – are the nets that we cast together or individually on the right side of the boat? We may have got used to doing our fishing in our way but Jesus way is different. How can we embrace Jesus' gentle, restorative and loving leadership to help us change? Jesus is the greatest and most effective agent of change the world has ever seen and known. Throughout the gospels we witness Jesus changing people. Why? It is because of His deep love for them. Jesus is a mentor; he is our supreme mentor, he doesn't just give instructions and then leave everyone to get on with them. He knows that we need Him with us; He knows that to lead people into fulfilling his vision, He must be with them in the mission. He is not an Alan Sugar who simply dishes out a task and then is not seen or heard during it until its completion when he makes a judgement on their performance. No, Jesus leadership is restorative and relational as He calls His disciples and you and I today to become like Him – to become an agent of change – to go and make disciples of all people, Will you meet with Jesus meet alone, in a group of 7 or a crowd of 500?

Perhaps He meets you in every situation – whether alone or with others...either way Jesus is not urging us to perform successfully as Christians but rather He compels us, with all of our ups and downs, failures and successes to BE with him...

Witness: Questions to discuss

- Spend time discussing Jesus' leadership qualities. Try to see how Jesus leads through studying this weeks bible passage and others which give examples of His leadership? Make a list...
- Since Jesus is our supreme mentor, how can we ensure that we allow Him to help us grow as disciples? What is a mentor?
- What relationships do you have which involve you in trying to reflect the leadership and mentoring qualities of Jesus?
- What does being an agent of change mean to you?
- Discuss what it means to cast your net on the other side? What can we draw out from the disciples experience? How can we (the Church) ensure that we are casting our net on the right side of the boat?
- Spend some time reflecting. Imagine you are on the shore with Jesus. In stillness He meets with you...what is He saying to you on the shore?