**The Ven Andy Broom, Archdeacon of the East Riding, reflects on Luke 5.1-11 for the Fourth Sunday before Lent, 9th February.**

Over the years, I've had the joy of speaking to all sorts of people about why they're a Christian, about what it is that helped them to come to faith, and how exactly it happened. Now, of course, one of the joys of talking to people in that way is that everyone's story is unique. For some, there has been a particular moment that things came together in an event. For others, it's been a journey over time, a journey of growing realisation of who God is and all that they mean to him.

For me personally, I can remember very clearly it happening. It was a moment for me. I was in a crowd, in an audience, hearing somebody speak. And I suspect most of the people in that crowd weren't actually particularly impacted by the talk. But for me, it was life changing. For me, as I heard the person’s talk about Christ and who he is, I knew I had to follow him. I knew he was worth committing my whole life to. It's a decision I've never regretted, and it's been completely life-changing for me.

And I was reminded of that when I read our gospel reading, because here we have Jesus speaking to a crowd. In fact, the crowd is so big that they keep pressing upon him and he's obviously worried he's going to get pushed over into the lake. And instead of getting wet, he decides to jump on a boat, it’s Peter's boat that he chooses, and he speaks to the crowd from there. But as the reading goes on, we see that the focus is no longer on the crowd, it's on Peter. It's on one individual. Because at the end of that time of talking to the crowd, Jesus says to Peter, “Take your boat out,” and points to the deep water where he says they'll catch fish. Now Peter's an experienced fisherman and he's been out all night, he's exhausted, he’s caught very little. Maybe deep down he's thinking, what does this preacher guy know about fishing?

But there's something about Jesus and the authority in which he speaks that Peter does what he's told, and he has this colossal catch. It's a colossal catch of fish which is overwhelming. It's overwhelming in the sheer number of fish, he has to get James and John to help him to drag the net in. But in a much more profound way, it's overwhelming for Peter. Do you see Peter's response? “Go away from me, Lord,” he says as he kneels before him. “For I am a sinful man.” Peter's realising that he's in the presence of somebody extraordinarily special. He hasn't, in this moment, worked out exactly who Jesus is, but there is something holy, something of the divine about this man, and in the light of that, Peter realises afresh something of his own failings, of his sinfulness, and he falls on his knees before Christ.

And what does Christ do? Well, it's worth noting he doesn't deny Peter's sinfulness. He recognises that's true. Nor does he deny the authority and the holiness that, by implication, Peter is putting upon Jesus himself. But what he does do is he reassures him. He says, “Do not be afraid,” and he calls him to follow him. He calls him no longer to be a fisherman of fish, but to be fishing for men and for women. The focus which began on the crowd ends up all on the one individual.

And it reminds me that we need to be sure that we're never tempted to hide in the crowd, to think either that we're not important, or to try to avoid what God is saying. For the truth is, God wants to speak to us. God does speak to us, and he longs that we will hear his voice and respond to it. And note, our failings, our sinfulness are not a barrier to God speaking to us.

But just as they weren't with Peter, nor are they with us, God calls us each and every day, sometimes profoundly, for the first time. And there may be people hearing this who actually have never themselves before acknowledged who Christ is. Maybe today is a day when you will do that. But for many of us who already follow him, there is that fresh call each and every day to hear his voice, to heed what he says, and to follow him in all that it means.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you that you notice us in the crowd and that you speak to us. Help us to hear your voice and follow you always. Amen.