**Sermon Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 6 Feb 2020**

**Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-11), Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11**

Here on the Mornington Peninsula, if I look out at the sea on a clear day, I will most likely see some boats sitting out on the water. Some are there for leisure while others are looking to catch fish. There are places on the Peninsula where people enjoy fishing from the beach and of course we see it each holiday season, the many boats that are brought down here in search of a good fishing spot.

Fishing is no easy business. It takes patience, strength and courage to sit and wait for a good catch. I recall when I lived in North Queensland, my friends and I would go fishing down the river, set crab pots and sometimes go fishing on the beach. It takes skill to catch a fish. Sometimes waiting quite a long time before feeling a bite on the line. Then the hard work begins, slowly bringing the fish in. Fishing with nets is another matter altogether. There were times we would go to the mouth of the river at the change of the tide and wade in with a net. Needless to say, sometimes we brought home a good catch, other times we would be throwing the fish back that were too small to bring home.

Today we find Simon, James and John out all night trying to catch fish. They are exhausted, tired and absolutely ready to bring their nets and their boat to shore. They have had enough. And in the gospel we know that they had had enough for they had indeed bought their boat back to the shore.

Jesus meets them, gets into the boat and begins to teach the people. When he finishes speaking Jesus says to Simon, ‘put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch’ (Luke 5:4). Now I’m not sure about you, but I think this would have been the last thing Simon, James and John would have wanted to do. They had, after all, been out all night and had not caught anything. At the point of exhaustion, at the point of thinking they had done all they could that evening, Jesus wants Simon to put the boat out onto the deep water and throw their nets out for a catch. Sometimes, it is when we are at our last, when we feel tired, exhausted and do not think we have anymore to give, God calls us to put out into the deep. To put our trust in God and go once again. It is in those moments that we hear God speaking to us once more. I still have more for you to do.

Simon could well have told Jesus that he was not willing to go out on the water again. He could have gone ashore, and rested. Instead, he says to Jesus, ‘if you say so, I will let down the nets’. Now I am intrigued at this point. Simon, James and John made a living out of fishing. They knew the waters, they would know when the best times were for fishing and the right conditions to go out onto the water. Jesus had been bought up the son of a carpenter! Jesus would have learnt that trade. What did Jesus know about fishing?

I guess this is not quite the point. Jesus, human and yet divine, also had a purpose in store for Simon going out onto the water. Simon needed to trust Jesus at his word. In the moments of exhaustion and tiredness. When we feel we cannot go on, our task is to only trust God and believe.

And Simon trusted Jesus, threw out his nets and they were so full, the nets began to break. So much so that they needed to ask others to bring their boats to come and help them. They filled not just one boat, but two! God’s overflowing abundance filled those boats. When I am exhausted, tired, not sure about continuing, God calls us to continue. Put out into the deep, and see what God can do with you. Are you running on empty? God calls us to trust him and brings to us abundance. Simon, James and John, although they were seasoned at fishing could not do so in their own strength. We are not called to journey with God alone. I am not called to this task alone. God calls us to partner with one another in the kingdom to bring an abundance of God’s gifts of love, compassion and grace to one another and to those around us.

God invites us to leave the familiar behind. To leave the things that hold us back, that limit us, inviting us into the abundance of his love, compassion and grace. I wonder if you and I can accept Jesus invitation even when we feel exhausted and tired? I wonder if we can imagine God bringing us into a place of abundance not only in our lives, but also in this place, at St Katherine’s and All Saints. What do we want for this Parish? What do we hope for this year? What is God calling you to do this year?

May we like Simon, put aside the weight that so easily besets us. Put aside our own thoughts and take time out to listen for that still small voice that says ‘This is the way, walk in it’.

May we grasp that which God is calling us to in this Parish, to grow in our faith, to grow our community, to be a bridge between the church and this community.

Amen.