St Timothy’s Crookes Spring Term 2018

The Call of God – notes for group leaders and preachers

Purpose: John 15:15 *“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*(NIV)

The Sermon Series this Spring will look at ‘calling’ in the Bible. We will look at how God called people in the Bible to help us understand how we might be called today. Throughout the Bible narrative, God calls individuals to work with him to bring about his will and purpose and we can learn the pattern and principles which we can apply to our own lives.

At St Tim’s we are committed to our 2020 vision of doubling people and passion. The new Vicar will want to discern God’s specific calling so that we will know how this vision will be fulfilled. We need to understand how God’s calling works so we can be ready and respond effectively. When God calls us by Grace, He knows that He will achieve His purpose and we will enjoy the adventure! As we hear the sermons or catch up on download and as we process in our home groups, we will encourage each other to hear God’s call. Then we can join in the adventure, see God fulfil His purposes and let Him have the glory as we get closer to our 2020 vision.

Main important ideas

* God’s call to us is personal to us and given to us by His grace not our merit.
* God’s call is always to a task that is impossible for us to accomplish in our strength.
* God completes his purposes by His grace rather than our efforts.
* In the process we get to know God better, which is His intention.
* Calling and vision are synonymous ref Proverbs 28:19 “If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.” (The Message)
* This all applies to us as individuals in some way or another

Title: Call of Noah Text: Gen 6:9-22

The call of Noah introduces our theme and the main important ideas above.

Questions

1. What is God saying to you in your life? What is His vision or calling to you?
2. What are you doing about it? Are you being called by God to your own task or to support someone else in theirs?
3. Does it seem impossible or at least very difficult and at times too much?
4. Have you experienced or are you experiencing God bringing about his purposes?

Title: Call of Abraham Text: Gen 12:1-5

The story of Abraham is a long and complex one. He features as a touchstone of faith, righteousness and what it means to be God’s people throughout both the Old and New Testament. His story starts very simply with this call. The call is personal to Abraham (Abram at this point) and involves the task of blessing all nations through his family. This is impossible for Abraham personally since a) he can’t meet everyone and b) he can’t have children with his wife Sarah. God ultimately fulfils his promise through Jesus, see Gal 3:7-14, Abraham’s descendant. In the process of following his call Abraham gets to know God better and is often called ‘The man of faith’.

Questions

1. Abraham received a clear call from God. Have you heard from God in some way in the past? Do you listen? How do you listen?
2. In what ways did Abraham exercise faith? Can you think of ways you have exercised faith?
3. Can you see the connection between Gen 12 and Gal 3, how does that make you feel about the Old Testament in relation to the New Testament.
4. Does the story of Abraham and the ‘trajectory of salvation’ to Jesus make you think any differently about the purposes of God and your place in them?

Title: Call of Moses Text: Exodus 3:1-17

Moses was not expecting God’s call he was doing his usual job of being a shepherd. The burning bush piqued his interest and drew him in. God was doing something Moses was interested. God speaks directly to Moses as His God, the God of Moses’ people. God gave Moses a clear (but next to impossible task). Moses objected that he couldn’t do it but God said not to worry, He would bring it about.

Questions

1. Moses received his call / vision when he was doing a usual activity. Have you ever sensed God speaking when you weren’t expecting it?
2. Moses was intrigued the burning bush. Is God doing anything at the moment to pique your interest or to get you to listen?
3. Have you ever felt called by God but felt unable to face the task?
4. Do you have experience of being part of a task that God is fulfilling, has fulfilled?

Title: Call of Joshua Text: Joshua 1

The call of Joshua embodies three clear principles, courage, obedience and togetherness. The word courage is repeated many times in this passage. The personal call from the Lord to Joshua requires courage as this group of refugees must fight like an army against people already entrenched and established, a difficult task. God requires obedience to the Law he gave to Moses because this reminds Israel that they are God’s people and in his care. Togetherness and teamwork are needed, the two tribes whose land is not across the Jordan must still go and fight because in facing a difficult task everyone needs encouragement.

Questions

1. Are you currently engaged with or being called to a task?
2. Where can we find courage from for God’s calling?
3. How can we support each other in being obedient to God’s call?
4. Do we belong to any teams working on tasks, how is it going, do you need some encouragement?

Title: Call of Samuel Text: 1 Sam 3

The call of Samuel is characterised by Samuel failing to realise it is the Lord calling, the explanation may be in v1. It takes a while and help from Eli for Samuel to hear the call and respond. Samuel chooses to listen and is encouraged by Eli although it turns out to be to Eli’s detriment. God stayed with Samuel and made good on all his words v19.

Questions

1. We live in a post-pentecost world where dreams and visions are promised. Are we expectant of a calling (synonymous with vision)?
2. How can we help each other to hear God’s calling?
3. Is it important to follow God’s call / vision if that means someone else feels uncomfortable because we are starting a new thing or stopping an old one?
4. If the answer to 3 is yes, how can we work our way around that? If it’s no, why not?

Title: Call of Jesus Text: Mark 1:9-15

These seven verses certainly pack a lot in! Firstly why was Jesus called to be baptised, he is everyway like us yet without sin. Secondly they paint an early and yet very clear picture of the doctrine of the trinity, Jesus (my son) Spirit (like a dove) and Father (my son). The calling is personal and it is about grace, God is well pleased with Jesus without Jesus having actually done anything yet. After his calling Jesus is tempted not to follow it and his identity is questioned, the parallel passage in Matthew 4 gives the details. Finally Jesus begins to proclaim the Kingdom of God, an impossible dream with the Romans in charge.

Questions

1. Do we recognise that God calls us first to be His children by grace not merit?
2. Do we recognise that this is the basis of anything we are called to do?
3. Are we sometimes tempted to forget that we are God’s children?
4. Does this make sticking to the task harder? How can we overcome these temptations (see Matt 4 for Jesus approach ‘It is written’)

Title: Call of the Disciples Text: Mark 8:31-38

Jesus reveals that part of His own calling is suffering. This is unexpected by the disciples and Peter particularly rebukes Him which Jesus doesn’t take well! However Jesus concern is that Peter is not thinking in God’s way with God’s priorities or God’s realistic understanding of the situation. Holy God must always be rejected among fallen humankind. Worse news is to come, Jesus reveals that following Him brings suffering to his disciples. God’s Holy people must also always suffer among fallen humankind. However we receive eternity. *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." - Jim Elliot*

Questions

1. Do you think we always have a good grasp of God’s priorities?
2. Do we sometimes find ourselves on the wrong side of the argument with Him?
3. Are we hanging on to anything we can’t keep at the expense of what we cannot lose?
4. How do we match our priorities with God’s? (Hint: Jesus was following God’s call)

Title: Call of Peter (Walk on Water) Text: Matt 14:22-32

Perhaps this unusual call to Peter is to help Him to learn a lesson of faith. Follow the call of Jesus however impossible and keep your eyes on Him and it will happen. There’s a book called ‘If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat’ by John Ortberg which is a good read but the title gives away the plot! Jesus calls Peter personally to something too difficult which He brings about and Peter gets to know Him better (v33). Are you seeing the pattern yet? ☺

Questions

1. What do you think Jesus is calling you to, does it look difficult?
2. What might Jesus be calling us as a church to?
3. Have we any experience to look back on when we followed a call / vision and Jesus did something amazing?
4. Are we in a boat? Do we need to get out? Practically what might that look like?

Title: Calling even when it's tough Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

There is comfort in our calling just as two weeks ago there was suffering. We are also called to comfort other people. The fruit of calling is patient endurance and hope. Both of these stem from God being in control of the outcome of a task too big. We patiently endure while he brings it about. We have a sure hope that he will. In between we take care of each other while we take up our various crosses.

1. Are you in need of comfort at the moment?
2. Do you have experience of giving or receiving comfort in the face of suffering?
3. How does this passage contribute to answering the question ‘Why does God allow suffering?’
4. Where are you with patient endurance and hope at the moment?

Title: Call of Paul Text: Acts 9:1-19

This call of Saul (to eventually become Paul) embodies the principles of the whole series. The call is very personal and by grace (Paul was persecuting the church). The task is impossible, what has the Jewish messiah to do with the gentiles and why on earth would they be interested anyway? Paul gets to know God better on the way (look at the letters he wrote). God brings it about – YOU are reading this!!!!

Questions

1. When you reflect on the call of Paul and on this series as a whole are you more ready to hear God’s call?
2. What will this be like for us as a church, how impossible is the 2020 vision?
3. If you join in you will get to know God better, how do you feel about that?
4. Try and imagine what it will look like when god brings it about, can you?