

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 11 May 2025 - The Fourth Sunday of Easter (Vocations Sunday)

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

[Genesis 7.1-5, 11-18, 8.6-18, 9.8-13]; Acts 9.36-end; Psalm 23; Revelation 7.9-end; John 10.22-30

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Dr David Newton, Diocesan Director of Ordinands**

Each year the Church marks the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter as 'Vocations Sunday'. The Gospel reading for that Sunday comes from John 10. And it speaks of Jesus 'calling' his sheep. The Latin word *voce* means call and it is where we get the word 'vocation' from.

This year we've decided to extend Vocations Sunday over the whole month. After all there is something about the whole of the Easter period which is about calling. Each year in Easter season we read some of the Acts of the Apostles. We hear how the Spirit of the risen Christ called the disciples and made them into apostles – ones sent across the Mediterranean to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Or even more broadly, we can think about the whole story of God in history as a story about calling. God spoke creation into being, called order out of chaos. God called Adam and Eve to tend and to multiply. God called the people of Israel to love and to follow God's laws. The Spirit called the church into being, called communities together to love one another (as John 13 puts it), called them to witness to the new life that had captivated them.

Notice, in that little synopsis, I have not mentioned specific callings to individuals, but just the general call to humanity, to Israel, to the Church. Usually when we think about calling, and certainly when we use the word vocation, we think about a specific call to a specific person. A call to some kind of church ministry given to so and so.

But, before we get to all that we have to remember God's call which is much more general, much more communal, and in many ways much more important. The call of God does not start with a specific flash from the sky to you, sitting there in the yellow jacket.

Indeed, it does not begin with a calling to *do* anything at all. It begins simply with this: the voice of God who calls each of us 'beloved'. Before God calls us to do anything, God simply calls us; calls us to Godself, calls us God's Beloved. Our first calling is simply as those who are loved and cherished by the creator.

Our first call is not to do or to achieve, to make, or to accomplish, it is simply to be-loved. As the church becomes increasingly anxious about its own future, we must remember that the first call is into the arms of our maker. Here we rest, here we find life.

Then comes a second call. As the be-loved we are then called to love. Note again, there is nothing specific here, no call to the one in the white hat, but a call to each and every one of us to 'love God and love neighbour'.

It is all too easy to get caught up in questions about what God is calling me to do. But there is a bit of a problem here – the focus becomes all too easily about me. *I* feel called to do this; *my* calling is to that. But really the focus should forever be on the one who calls, the originator, the life speaker, the one who 'gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist' (as Romans 4.17 so wonderfully puts it).

So, before we ever think about God's specific call on your life, or my life, we must always begin with the call of God, who calls us be-loved and then calls us to love. It takes a life-time (and more) to work that through. Have I really "got" the unconditional nature of God's love, that comes before I have done anything? And then, what does it mean to love neighbour – what does that mean for my job, my money, my priorities, let alone my every-day interactions with others.

Yet we can – and must – go beyond that general call too. For God does not just call us be-loved, God also gives us each a specific name. He called Moses, Jael, Cyrus, Mary – to name a few of the more unlikely figures.

Again though, note before we are called to do anything specific, we are simply called something specific. We are called as a unique individual with gifts and skills, quirks and foibles, vulnerabilities and challenges. The name be-loved is given concrete form in James, Jill, Jeffrey or Jemima. We are called be-loved; we are called by a specific name.

And then only then, are we called to a specific task. God calls us to bring our whole-selves in service to others, not in some generic way, but in a way that makes sense of who we are and where we find ourselves to be.

Perhaps we have a job that just kind of happened. But still, whilst there, doing that job, we find ourselves being called to support Jimmy, or blow the whistle on some malpractice, or gently speak about Jesus over coffee. Or maybe we sense that call of God in service to community, as we serve coffee at the volunteer café, or visit the lonely. Or maybe there is that gentle calling, suggested by others, to ministry in the church – to being an ordained minister, an LLM, or a church warden.

When we think about the voice of God who calls, we should never begin by asking, 'what should I do?' We begin by hearing the voice of the One who calls us beloved and calls us to love. Within that context, and on that foundation, we open ourselves to hearing the voice of the one who calls us by name, and calls us to work out that love in particular ways for particular people in whatever context we find ourself. In doing that, we find the fullness of life that Christ promises us.

### **Ways to Engage all Generations**

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what super-power you would choose if you could have one?
- I wonder how it makes you feel to hear yourself called beloved?
- I wonder what you think you are good at? Skilled at? Gifted at? How do you think God might use those things?

### **Suggested intercessions**

For the ministry of all Christian people: Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

On this Vocations Sunday, we pray for vocations to the Church's ministry: May many be led to consider a calling to the priesthood, the diaconate, the religious life and various lay ministries, and may we all discover anew God's calling in our own lives.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For our bishops, priests, deacons and religious leaders: especially N. our bishop, and N. our parish priest, that they may be renewed in their dedication to a truly humble and loving service to all God's people, and those who are preparing for ordination: may they be guided and inspired by the example of the good shepherd.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For political leaders, that they may follow the example of the Good Shepherd in their care and concern for those who are entrusted to them.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who suffer in any way: May God comfort them, and his healing hand strengthen and protect them.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For ourselves and all God's people: that we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd in the stillness of our hearts and follow closely in his footsteps.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For the departed: may they attain the fullness of life within the endless Easter festival of heaven, those who have died recently, and those whose anniversaries of death occur this week.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In a moment of silence we bring our own needs and concerns to our heavenly Father.

Silence is kept.

**Merciful Father..**

*Diocese of Llandaff*

### ***Suggested hymns/songs***

As known locally.

### ***Activities to accompany the service***

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@ lectionary resource)