

**Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit  
SERVICE AT HOME –Sunday 24th January**

Prepared by the Revd Gareth Hill

**Call to worship**

*'... the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.'*  
(Romans 13: 11-12)

**Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

Will you come and follow me? (StF 673)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o469PRLdbHU>

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around  
Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when I but call your name!  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

- John L. Bell (b1959), Graham Maule (b1958)

**Praying together**

We are passing through a time that leads into a new way of being church.  
At this threshold we are not alone:  
God is creating new paths and possibilities, as we prepare for where we are going.  
*Reflect in silence on what is needed to prepare for this new way of being.*  
Christ is freeing us with newfound love and grace, as we learn from where we have been.  
*Reflect in silence on what has been learned from our history especially the past year.*  
The Spirit is revealing new dreams to guide us, as we start our journey home on a new path.  
*Reflect in silence and acknowledge your feelings as we wait for God's new time.*

At this threshold:

We take courage in the assurance that God goes with us;  
we affirm our call to go where Christ leads;  
and  
we trust the Spirit to guide us through the challenging space between, where we have been, where we are, and where we are going.

Surely, we are not alone.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin  
against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us  
from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are  
yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

Reading Mark 1: 14-20

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'*

*16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

### Reflection

Towards the end of CS Lewis's great Narnia series, in The Last Battle, there is a passage where Aslan the lion reappears. The final action to reclaim Narnia for good is about the start.

Aslan speaks: "...children, I have other work to do." He went to the Door and they all followed him. He raised his head and roared "Now it is time!" then louder "Time!"; then so loud that it could have shaken the stars, "TIME." The Door flew open."

The story continues with all those on the side of goodness going "further up and further in" to

the new reality brought about by Aslan's intervention. The Narnia series is fiction but is seen by many as an allegory of the cosmic battle between good and evil, with Aslan as a Christ figure who brings about restoration and a new reality.

Mark has always seemed to me to be the news reporter of the Gospel writers: there is always action in the way he writes. There are 41 uses of 'immediately' (εὐθύς) in his writing. Time is of the essence for the Jesus portrayed by Mark.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus makes his appearance, calling out: "The time has come." This isn't a reference to the time of day but to God's moment which is dawning and demanding action.

Another Gospel writer, Matthew, regularly quoted the Old Testament for his listeners. He turns to Isaiah :

*the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. (Matthew 4:16 quoting Isaiah 9:2)*

There was a sense in which the Israelites had been trapped in continuing darkness including being overwhelmed by unwelcome conquerors. At this point it was Rome but God's appointed time brought with it a declaration of freedom.

The arrest of John the Baptist appears to have been the trigger and Jesus comes telling everyone that God is on the move. This meant, Jesus said, that's God's way of doing things - the kingdom or rule of God - could be everyone's experience.

One of the dangers in being a Church these days is that we can be unsure how to connect with the community around us. What do we say that makes sense? How do we model God's character? What strategy should we use?

Here it is Jesus saying: God has a better way of living. It brings light in your dark places. God's plan offers you a new start.

The football transfer window closes in just over a week. Managers have spent time deciding

who they need to add to their playing squads and to bring an extra dimension to the way the team plays. The hope is that new personnel will kick-start something. The choice is crucial. Who will add that extra something?

Here a new movement needs a team. Both Mark and Matthew's gospels have Jesus walking past Peter, Andrew, James and John and simply calling them to follow. Luke and John have different extra bits to their stories but it doesn't mean they conflict. There's added detail but no conflict. The critical thing isn't in the precise circumstances but in the fishermen's response.

'At once ... they followed him' - leaving behind who they have been in order to discover God's new and richer call.

Douglas Hare in the Interpretation series of commentaries, writes: 'Jesus summons with irresistible authority, and the men respond with radical obedience ... There is no hint of their future importance. Instead they seem to represent all future believers whom Jesus irresistibly summons to follow him. It may not be necessary for all to leave professions and possessions behind, but ... all must leave **their world** behind and enter the new world into which Jesus invites them.'

What does your 'at once' look like? For all of us it involves responding to God's call on our life because it has come through Jesus. We may have to leave different things behind: sometimes homes; sometimes good things and precious people; sometimes careers; sometimes attitudes and habits.

The outcome isn't always obvious either. Fishing for people was a good line to use with people who fished for a living. How does that work itself out for us as carers, teachers, scientists, parents, friends .. and much more.

The clue is in the 'at once'. Without knowing all the answers they became followers, learners, disciples.

Peter, Andrew, James and John didn't follow for an hour or a week. They kept following as Jesus

began his ministry. They signed up to be part of God's new movement.

Jesus' catchphrase was *'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'* He expected there to be a consistent and continuing change and that call comes down the centuries to us here. God is calling us to a new way of following; we can't respond once - it has to be a consistent, regular following. Sometimes we have to not just leave our boats but burn the ships.

In our day, one of the things organisations are challenged to know is the end goal. What do you want to happen as a result of your actions? The first disciples had no idea what the future held: martyrdom; leadership; anonymity; failure or success. Neither do we. Our call is to keep following faithfully.

Charles Colson, notorious for being President Richard Nixon's hatchet man, once declared he would run over his own grandmother to get Nixon re-elected. He went to prison for his part in the Nixon government's cover-up of illegal activity but became a Christian just before serving his sentence.

On release he started Prison Fellowship, which works with inmates across the world. On his desk, placed at eye-level so Colson would be sure to see it when he was sitting down, was a sign with just three words on it: 'Faithfulness Not Success'.

Faithfulness is to keep following the one who calls; to model the Kingdom of God in our lives. It's what Jesus called us to do. And it's time! Amen.

### **Prayers for Others**

In faith let us pray to God our Father, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God of love, we pray for the life of your Church throughout the world . . . May every congregation be a community of love and every Christian a witness to your grace. Renew all who worship in this place that we may be a living fellowship

in your Spirit and serve our neighbourhood.  
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of mercy, we pray for the life of the world.  
. . . and for those who exercise power . . . Show  
us how to live as members of the human family;  
to reject the ways of war; to bear each other's  
burdens and to work together for justice and  
peace.  
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of compassion, we pray for those who are  
ill or anxious at home or in hospital . . . We pray  
for those whose lives are filled with fear and  
despair . . . Draw near with your saving love  
and bring healing and hope.  
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of glory, we rejoice in the communion of  
saints; we remember all who have faithfully  
lived and all who have died in Christian hope,  
especially . . . Help us to follow their example  
and bring us with them into the fullness of your  
eternal joy.  
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding;  
pour into our hearts such love towards you  
that we, loving you above all things,  
may obtain your promises,  
which exceed all that we can desire;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult (StF 250)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL4hjmbOA\\_s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL4hjmbOA_s)

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult  
of our life's wild restless sea,  
day by day his voice is sounding,  
saying: 'Christian, follow me.'

As of old apostles heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us,  
saying: 'Christian, love me more.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures:  
'Christian, love me more than these.'

Jesus calls us! By your mercies,  
Saviour, may we hear your call,  
give our hearts to your obedience,  
serve and love you best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895)

### **Commission & Benediction**

Go now, follow where Christ calls you  
and proclaim the message God gives you.  
Wait in hope for God.

Avoid become bound up in the business of the  
world, ut live in readiness for the inbreaking of  
the Kingdom.

And may God be your haven and your glory;  
May Christ Jesus give you courage for his mis-  
sion;  
And may the Spirit embrace your soul in God's  
silence.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

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