The Invitation

Luke 4:14-21 & 5:1–11 (NIV)

Good morning everyone! I figured we would start off with a bit of a game this morning… Please stand up with me if you are able. It's called Simon says… anyone heard of it?

*** Play Simon Says.**

That was fun and it has NOTHING to do with today's sermon. I'm kidding. It might, but we'll come back to that later.

We are in a series called "On the Way with Jesus" - this is a journey through Lent as we walk with Jesus towards Jerusalem and towards the cross. As we follow Jesus as he models ministry "on the way", this lenten season is a chance to stop, to wander with Jesus, to follow him in the in-betweens, and to slow down our pace to listen, learn from, and journey with Jesus. As we explore calling on the way, we also remember our journey as a church, "on the way" with Jesus towards what he is calling Cornerstone to in the next season.

Today, we are going to meet Jesus in two places - the Synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth and at the Sea of Galilee. We are going to split this story into three acts:
The Call
The Invitation
The Response.

The Call:

This is the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, he hadn't really done too much yet, but he has become quite a celebrity and everyone is talking about him. Two weeks ago we joined Jesus' journey when he was baptised by his cousin John and the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. The next section, which we covered last week, follows Jesus as he is tempted by the devil in the desert. It is important to note, that at the beginning of each of these sections, and the section we will walk through today, there is the same reminder - Jesus was full of the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we pick up in Chapter 4:17 - Jesus has returned to his hometown of Nazareth and is speaking in the temple. It says,

and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.
Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”[a]
(Luke 4:17-19)

Jesus is reading from one of my favourite passages in Isaiah, Chapter 61. When he came to the end of it, every eye was fixed on him. He handed the scroll to the attendant, sat down, and said, “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21)

He is saying that he is the fulfillment of this prophecy. And in this moment, he is naming himself as the Messiah. The Son of God. The one who has come to bring freedom, restoration, and liberation.

Now there is something important to note here, if you were to jump back to Isaiah 61, you would notice that Jesus stops before finishing the last line of the verse. “proclaim the day of vengeance of our God”. This is intentional and measured.

Jesus came to be the Salvation, not in the way that the people of God expected. They expected a righteous warrior, a coming king - who would tear down and defeat their enemies. Who would restore rightness to their people, but at the expense of others.

But in this intentional stop, Jesus is showing a different way. Not a way of vengeance, but a way of grace and salvation. He's stating clearly that he has come for the poor, the blind, the prisoners, the oppressed - physically and societally yes, but also the poor, blind, and oppressed in spirit. He’s doing things differently than what anyone expected.

He stated that he hasn’t just come for some people, but he has declared the year of the Lord’s favour for everyone. A direct reference to the year of Jubilee, the year in which all debts are marked paid. All slaves freed. The oppressed redeemed. The year of Jubilee, is this reference to flourishing, rightness, debt being forgiven. He’s naming himself as the bringer of salvation.

The year of Jubilee is mentioned countless times throughout the Biblical narrative, but there is no record of it ever being upheld. But now, Jesus is enacting it - he is pointing to the future restoration of the world and pointing to himself as the bringing of redemption, forgiveness, and freedom. He’s stepping into their world and speaking their language.

And so we step back to the previous verses, where Jesus has given us a blueprint for his calling here on earth, to proclaim the year of Jubilee in which he will…

- Proclaim good news to the poor
- Freedom for the prisoners
- Recovery of sight for the blind
- Set the oppressed free
- Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

This is the ministry that Jesus is about to step into, this is the calling of Jesus' life. And in the next chapters of Luke as Jesus lives out his calling and ministry as he journeys towards Jerusalem, we see him continually choosing these exact people. The poor, the outcast, the oppressed, the sick, the prisoners - His whole ministry was aimed at those on the margins.

Now this call of Isaiah that Jesus fulfills, this turning to the margins, is not a new theme in the Bible. This is this beautiful, Genesis through Revelation theme of Biblical justice that weaves its way through the stories of the Lord and his people.

It started when God created the world perfectly, in perfect rightness, or what we call shalom - and humans and creation lived exactly as God intended, the flourishing of all God made. But, as we know, things didn't quite go as planned. Humans chose their own way and that caused a rift in the relationships between humans and God, humans and each other, humans and creation, and humans and themselves. But God couldn't stand these broken relationships, so he set a beautiful rescue plan into motion that culminates, of course, in the New Heaven and the New Earth where everything will be made right once and for all, but also in the life of Jesus.

But there's also this in between where shalom has not yet been fully restored. So in the in-between God calls his people to be people of Justice, or misphat - the Hebrew word for justice, which means the processes through which shalom, peace, rightness, the flourishing of creation, is brought forth.

Throughout the old testament we see this continued call from God to his people to be people of justice. Mishpat. But, we are humans and we continue to mess up. But here in the personhood of Jesus, we see the crux of the story. Humanity is given a blueprint, a way to live out this rightness and justice in the world as it is. In the midst of brokenness.

In this moment, Jesus is naming his calling. To care for the vulnerable, to bring restoration, and to proclaim salvation - the year of the Lord's favour. He is pointing to the cross with the goal of bringing as many people along with him as he can. And guess what, he invites us to join him.

The Invitation:

So we jump forward to Luke chapter 5. Jesus is preaching on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, a huge crowd has gathered. He's got quite the reputation and people are excited to hear what Jesus has to say. But the crowd is big and pushing in on him, so he needs to back up… but there is a sea behind him.

He sees Simon who is cleaning his fishing nets beside his boat, so he asks if he can use this boat as a stage, a pulpit. Simon agrees, and so Jesus steps into Simon's world. They push off a little bit from shore and after Jesus finishes speaking he turns to Simon and asks him to put his net over the side of the boat.

Now let's step back for a second here and think about what this actually felt like for Simon. He was the expert here. He had been out all night. He was tired. He had just finished cleaning his nets. He had just come in from a long night of fishing with no results. And now here's this guy, a rabbi - not a fisherman, not someone with experience. Someone who had just taken over his boat and used it as a stage. And now this guy is asking him to put his nets, freshly cleaned, BACK into the water.

Simon's response is tired and logical. "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." We've tried Lord, and nothing. Why would we try again?

It made no sense. There were no fish. And if there were no fish at night, there certainly would be no fish during the day in the heat of the sun, that's exactly why they fished all night. Simon was a fisherman, he knew.

But, he also knew Jesus. He had heard his words, seen him heal his mother in law, he knew.

So Simon turns to Jesus and says, "But because you say so, I will let down the nets." (Luke 5:5)

Because you say so.

Jesus asked him to do it, so he did.

It wasn't logical, it didn't make any sense, it came after trying all night, but he obeyed.

It wasn't about the calling, it was about who was asking.

Remember that one time we played Simon says, that was fun, eh? We played Simon Says and now we're talking about a guy named Simon, but it's not about what he says, it's about what Jesus said to him… I asked you to do a lot of things, but you had to listen carefully. It wasn't about all the crazy things I was asking you to do, it was WHO was asking you to do it.

Simon said yes, because Jesus was the one who asked.

What about you? What is Jesus asking you to do this morning? Where do you need to respond, “Because you say so, I will do it”?

This was the first half of Jesus’ invitation to Simon.

And so even though it seemed ridiculous. Simon listened. And God responded. In a moment. Things became very overwhelming. The nets went taught, the fish started jumping, and they started pulling in the nets! The boat became so full of fish that it started to sink. They had to call another boat to come and help them.

Finally, they made it back to shore - Simon looked at the fish, then looked at Jesus and was completely overcome. Simon fell at Jesus’ feet. In repentance, he looks at Jesus and calls himself sinful.

He was right, but Jesus’s response is one of grace and love. “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” (Luke 5:10)

This is the real invitation. The most incredible invitation. He’s inviting Simon to follow him. Simon calls himself a sinner and unworthy and Jesus says sure, but I want you to be part of what I am doing. So he invites him, calls him, to be part of Jesus’ ministry, to walk alongside him on the way.

The Response

So that brings us to the response. Jesus offers something completely new to Simon. And Simon says yes. Because he has seen Jesus, heard Jesus, been with Jesus, he says yes. Even though he had no clue what he was really saying yes to, he said yes. Often faithful obedience precedes full clarity.

But this faithful obedience also required active sacrifice.

So Simon literally walks away. He leaves everything. His equipment. The whole school of fish that he just pulled in. His boats. His family. His life. He leaves all of it on the shore. And follows Jesus, and a few chapters later will actually be back on the same sea in another boat with Simon (called Peter then) and Jesus as Jesus invites him again to step out in faith. Into a place that didn't seem logical. Where Jesus showed up.

So the same calling that Jesus fulfilled himself in the previous chapter, becomes an invitation to his people. Jesus also invites Andrew on that shore and 10 more soon after

- They become this mismatched, untrained, unlikely group of people that Jesus meets on the way and invites into his ministry.

And the same calling that that Jesus fulfilled and Jesus passed to his disciples is the same calling that he gives us today to be people who:

- Proclaim good news to the poor
- Freedom for the prisoners
- Recovery of sight for the blind
- Set the oppressed free
- Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

This same calling to be people of justice, care, love, and restoration that invites people into Jesus' salvation is the same today as it was then. For us to be fishers of men. To invite as many as possible to follow the Lord and trust that Jesus, who is faithful, will do the rest.

But this calling doesn't always look the same for all of us. It meets us where we are at and uses our stories. Jesus spoke Simon's language and used fish to get his attention. He used a shepherd analogy to call Moses and David because that was their world.

Jesus transforms our vocation for his Kingdom purpose.

So what invitation is Jesus extending to you? How is he asking you to use your life? Your giftings, your talents, your treasures to fulfill this same calling? Where is he asking you to walk with him on the way through the wilderness towards Jerusalem? How is he leading you through silence and temptations to be people who declare the year of the Lord's favour? To be people of shalom, rightness, and flourishing in our broken world?

The same call that Jesus gave to Simon that day is the same invitation that he extends to us to be part of his ministry, to be part of his rescue, to be an active member in his family, and what he is doing in the world today.

But with all of that, with the calling and the invitation, he leaves the response to you.

So what is your response?

Are you ready to say, "Because you say so, I will do it."

Where do you find yourself today?

Maybe you find yourself in the towns and villages, hearing stories of this Jesus guy and wanting to know more. Take that next step to join him on the shore - listen to his teaching.

- Join a small group, a workshop, keep coming back on Sundays. Check out our website where you can find the details for our next Group Launch, baptism, or workshop - chat with a member of our team. (If we have slides for any of these things we could put it up - or a slide for the hub?)

Maybe you find yourself in the synagogue, fixated on the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour who promises to make things right. Lean in, trust him, believe in the truth that this salvation is for you.

- Remind yourself of Jesus' promises. That he loved you so much that he gave his life for YOU so that you can have new life. If you want to talk more about how Jesus can be a part of your life, our staff and pastors are here to talk.

Maybe you find yourself on the shore, listening to his teachings and hanging on every word. Continue to press in, go to the shore, and listen intently.

- Spend time in scripture. Meditate on his Word. Dig deep into Jesus' words and example to us. If you've made a Lent commitment, keep following along. If you haven't you still can! Join us at our Lenten prayer spaces - a Space to Pray Along the Way. (Link or slide to website)

Maybe you find yourself in the other boat, being called to help and witnessing Jesus' miracles in the lives of others. Keep looking, keep listening, Jesus is for you too.

- Get involved. Join a team. Serve with us here at Cornerstone and see what Jesus is up to in the community. Join us as we pursue justice and flourishing. You can check out our serve wall in the cafe or visit the serve page on our website to see all the opportunities to volunteer here at Cornerstone. (Slide or slide for serve page on website)

And Maybe you find yourself in the boat, beside Jesus - weary and tired from a lot of work on your own. Maybe you are hearing Jesus' invitation to something new, something that may not make a lot of sense. Something that requires sacrifice and faithful obedience. Maybe it's time to fall at Jesus' feet and say, "Because you said so, I will do it." I will follow you. I will go all in. I will invite others along. I will look out for those on the margins. I will follow you.

Jesus calls us to be people of justice.

He extends the invitation to join us in his ministry.

And he eagerly awaits our response.

"Because you said it, I will do it."

Jesus is inviting us all to walk with him on the way.

He's inviting you and me and Cornerstone.

And as we journey on the way individually and collectively, I know God will use each of us to be fishermen in his Kingdom. Let's invite as many people as possible to join us on the way.

Communion.

Now we're going to come together to the table. A little while later, this same group of misfit followers that Jesus invited to walk with him would be sitting with Jesus around the Passover table in the upper room. Jesus invited them, welcomed them, ate with them, washed their feet, and told them what was to come.

His invitation to them is the invitation to us. To join with him, to be forgiven, to remember.

Luke 22:19-20 (NIV)

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus is inviting you to join him.

His table is wide and open.

Come to the table.

Benediction:

From Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on US,
because the Lord has anointed US
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent US to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives

and release from darkness for the prisoners,[a]
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
WE will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

Summary:

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee Jesus invites Simon to join him on the way in ministry. Jesus names his calling, invites Simon to join him, and Simon responds, leaving everything to become a fisherman for God's Kingdom. So what invitation is Jesus extending to you? How is he asking you to use your life? Your giftings, your talents, your treasures to fulfill this same calling? The same call that Jesus gave to Simon that day is the same invitation that he extends to us to be part of his ministry, to be part of his rescue, to be an active member in his family, and what he is doing in the world today.