

Last week was the first of three texts I feel the Lord would have us consider over three weeks

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-20

**God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

### 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,

We spoke about reconciliation with God and reconciliation with another or others as the case may be.

Sadly there are many who say they're reconciled to God but live in an unreconciled state with others. In relation to this I got a text this week from a long-time friend who went through a very acrimonious divorce many years ago. Recently he and his former wife spent some time together with their respective spouses. His comment *'we enjoyed a lovely week with them with no negative stuff at all. I think we have reached a new level,'* spoke to me of reconciliation in Paul's understanding. I took many things from Kim's story both when she spoke to me 6 weeks ago and when she spoke on Sunday – you don't forget (reconciliation isn't necessarily forgetting but it is being able to live with what's happened in a forgiving way). Not easy but with God grace, possible.

## RECONCILIATION WITHIN

Reconciliation to God enables a person to be reconciled with or to be at peace within. There are many in our nation who lived tortured lives because they've never known the integrating work God does within. I'm speaking of those who find it impossible to accept themselves or others who are torn apart by unresolved grief, guilt, fears and pasts. Sadly many of these would say they've been reconciled to God. I'm not saying this is easy but I am saying that the Spirit of God is able to bring disjointed spirits and distracted hearts to a point of peace within. I'm also aware however that there are many who prefer to hold on to their discontent rather than know reconciliation within.

And also to remember what the great theologian Dr Seuss has to say about this: **'Today you are you that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you.'**

To be a reconciled to God, to live in reconciliation with one another (applies to me too) and to be at peace/reconciled with your present and your past – this is the good news; the gospel

The second text I'd like to speak to is found in a longer reading

**Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'**

It seems appropriate that we consider this text in the light of lessons we will learn and observations we will make in a couple of weeks when we fish out the Southern Reservoir.....

Let's hear the context but I do want to focus on the one statement Jesus made.

## Luke 5:1-11

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret; the people were crowding round him and listening to the word of God.

2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

5 Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this; he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

We thought a bit more widely about this text in May 2015 as part of our journey through Luke, which might I add, has got some distance to run. We will return in due course to Luke. He's been asking me – when are you going to finish what you've started? I replied, all in good time – after all you did write this stuff nearly 2000 years ago.

Jesus said: **'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'**

And the question I ask myself is this? When Jesus said this to Peter was it for them or for all time? If it is for all who seek to follow Jesus then it must be for us too.

On March 5, all being well, we're going to be catching fish like Luke tells us it should be.... We're literally going to be fishing for and catching fish. We hope to harvest some fish, after all Fish and Game have put them there. But there are many things that have to align for this to happen – appropriate fishing gear, helpful weather, the right bait or lure, the proximity of fish, the fish biting, then we must hook, reel in and land our prize.....

So when we make the shift from fish to people – some things don't change.

Appropriate preparation

A helpful climate

Baits and lures sorted

People being around us or in our lives

And of course when people say to us they'd like to be caught we bang them over the head with our large Bibles as you would with a fish. When they come round we can say, actually while you were sleeping, we did all we could to get God's word into you.

Our effectiveness as Christian fisher folk, for want of a better expression, starts with a desire to understand Jesus saying to us:

**'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'**

This is challenge for me and for us. In our neighbourhood we're getting to know people (changing neighbourhood) – two of our neighbours are part of the Caversham Presbyterian community;

we've met our Indian neighbours, neighbours where the daughter used to come to Youth Group (she was baptised here but now lives in Wellington), an older couple with whom I have a number of connections, an older woman living on her own; a couple of young guys working for Chorus. I haven't exhausted the list of our neighbours. There are some dodgy people who live in Hazel Avenue who look into our living room – someone told me they come to this church. And that's only our neighbours. The point I'm trying to make is that we're surrounded by fish/people! And I'm sure you are too.

Do we need form a Caversham Baptist Fishing Club? There are fishing clubs whose interest is catching fish – surely our interest is something much more significant.

We'd have to work out our mission and have a mission statement

We'd have to work out the rules

We'd have to have a constitution

We'd have to meet and swap fishing stories

We'd have to learn new and better ways of fishing

We'd have to learn to depend on the great fisherman, Jesus

And much more!

Above all we'd have to listen when Jesus says

**'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'**

To conclude:

Communities like ours develop in a range of ways – people come through all sorts of doors to become part of this community:

- Those who move into the city
- Those who come from other churches
- Children coming with their parents
- Babies being born while their parents are come
- Those who have an encounter with Jesus and want to find a community to belong to
- Those who are invited by members of the congregation to our activities and ministries; and who are so impressed by the quality of life of the invitee that they want to join in.

**AND!**

Those who've been fished for and got hooked so to speak.

We can do nothing about most of these reasons; the one we can is to take seriously Jesus words,

**'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'**

Will I? Will you, will we?