

# Sunday Morning Resources

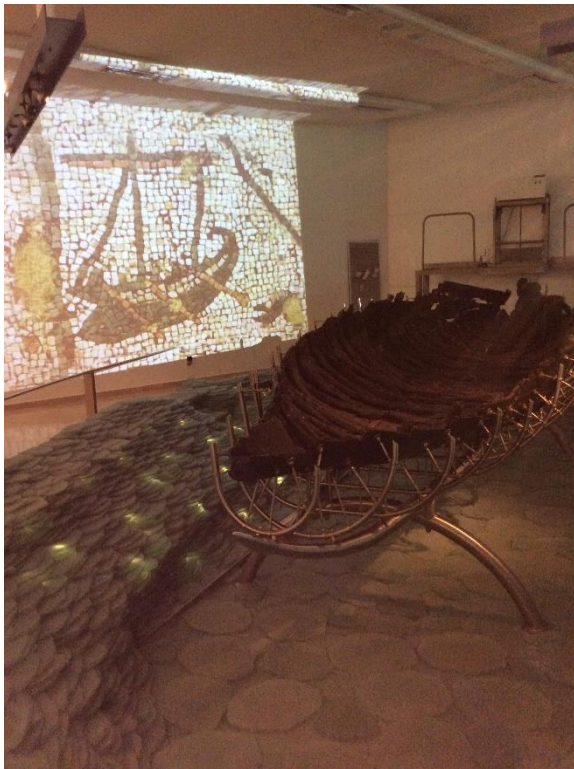
Sunday 25 January 2026 - The Third Sunday of Epiphany

**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)

Isaiah 9.1-4; Psalm 27. 1, 4-11 [or 27. 1-11]; 1 Corinthians 1.10-18; Matthew 4.12-23

## Homily

Today's homily has been written by **Amanda Tuck, LLM in the Orwell Group Benefice**



If you visit a museum by the Sea of Galilee today, they will show you a boat.

Or, more accurately, you will see the **remains** of a boat.

A fishing boat which probably belonged to families who lived near that turbulent inland Sea at the time of Jesus.

A very long time ago. Over 2000 years have passed since then.

We heard in our reading from Matthew's gospel today that Jesus was in the Galilee area.

He was talking to everyone about the wonderful love of God.

He was healing the sick and calling for repentance; and asking people to stop being so self-centred.

Jesus was saying that **he** was the long-awaited Messiah and that his Kingdom was drawing near. Powerful messages for the people of Israel.

What has that got to do with a boat in a museum, you are wondering.

Well, this ancient boat in the museum is much more than a pile of old timber. It's a living relic, which, if we let it, will help us feel a real connection with what Jesus was doing on that day. That boat, the remains of the boat, becomes a thread (or maybe a roughly made rope),

linking the **first** to the **most modern** followers of Jesus. Linking two very different times in history together. All possible because of an ancient, man-made object, a fishing boat.

**[Pause]**

Those disciples, humble fishermen who came across Jesus that day, became **fishers of men**. They probably already knew about Jesus and what he had been doing on the momentous day they met and talked. Those four fishermen – James, John, Peter and Andrew – were invited to join Jesus. It is amazing that they agreed. They suddenly decided to turn over their safe and secure lives and businesses to Christ's direction and control. They never looked back.

**Just like that.**

That ancient wooden boat, like our church's naves (a word that comes from the same root<sup>1</sup>) once protected sailors just as churches welcome, protect and embrace people of faith.

The boats of all ancient fishermen were sturdy answers to important questions. Their boats kept them safe; they held both fishing gear and the catch. They were also status symbols. Much more than a means of making a living and putting food on tables.

The family boat would have been a real and valued asset, possibly given a name. Certainly, well cared for by seasoned fishermen. Lives depended on the vessel working for them as they worked with it. Much more than a way to catch fish.

Like an expensive family car today, perhaps. It's hard to imagine anyone found it easy to abandon.

Imagine the scene when Jesus arrived. See folks going about their business. Then everyone being caught up in an unexpected event – Jesus walking, talking, healing, teaching amongst them.

Then Jesus deliberately choosing, singling out simple fishermen from among all who crowded around. Then James, John, Peter and Andrew agreeing to follow. Them changing their way of life in that moment to become close witnesses.

They became disciples who would go on to testify to the miraculous working out of God's earthly mission. Disciples who, after Jesus's earthly span, would have the vital responsibility of spreading the Word and acting out the triumphant message that God had done something amazing through Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *nave* is from *navis*, the [Latin](#) word for *ship*, an early Christian symbol of the [Church](#) as a whole,

**But** in performing this role of supporting Jesus those disciples broke with family, gave up their livelihoods, homes and familiar communities. They left their valuable boats behind too, for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was asking a lot.

Not easy.

These men's lives were never the same again. The Divine purpose, God, was at work through Jesus and reaching the fishermen that day. Jesus's followers had to be prepared to carry forward the work he launched – after Jesus's death, even to heal the sick and announce the coming of God's rule wherever they were needed. These people were to make themselves vulnerable, to surrender their lives, but they would gain a life to come.

**[Pause]**

Back to that ancient boat, then. Amazingly, it was found sticking out of the Sea mud after a dry summer. A hot dry summer when so much water had evaporated. So, teams of modern archaeologists carefully lifted and preserved the precious remains.

They discovered exactly the sort of boat with which Jesus's special friends would have used. Andrew and Peter or the sons of Zebedee would have had no trouble setting sail in it.

The disciples, when Jesus asked, willingly left their boats behind. That was leaving **EVERYTHING** they valued most. It cost them so much to walk away from their way of life as small businesspeople. It would have been hard and risky to abandon the occupation they knew and loved to follow Jesus.

**[Pause]**

I wonder what it would take for **you** to leave what you know and value most?

I wonder what events could make people form excited crowds willing to follow an extraordinary leader today here in Britain.

Football, music concerts, fireworks, or the Christmas lights being switched on in the centre of a city?

Yes, great excitement might form a temporary distraction. However, much more than a single charismatic event would be needed for practical people to abandon everything as an act of faith.

Those disciples were clearly pulled **away** from their skilled occupations to walk **towards** Jesus. They couldn't have known what their future had in store. None of us do.

What was it about Jesus, I wonder, which made those fishermen give up their way of life to follow him?

What was it about what he said and did which was so powerful?

Put yourself into this scene from Matthew 4 for a moment. What would **you see, hear and feel**?



Would you gladly give up **everything you know** to follow someone who could heal people, who was talking of the **sovereign rule of the Kingdom of heaven in a Roman occupied land**? Jesus, as a homeless itinerant preacher was leading his many followers towards uncertainty. A pathway leading to the unknown.

But those disciples felt they knew what kind of man Jesus was. His power of love was extraordinary.

Matthew, through narrating this event, portrays Jesus as a great Jewish prophet in a long line of prophets. **BUT** Jesus is not rejected as so many ancient prophets were. Here Jesus not only fulfils the ancient scriptures, but he persuades people to follow him.

James, John, Peter and Andrew readily and immediately followed Jesus's call. They wanted to be part of God's Kingdom on Earth which was unfolding. They really wanted to be with him.

**[Pause]**

May we, too, be prepared to follow the disciples' example of wholehearted acceptance and obedience to the love of Christ.

May we be prepared, despite life's many uncertainties, and uncomfortable sacrifices, to do God's will.

We are, after all, right now, here today, in a fragile boat of faith.

But God is always with us.

**Amen**

### ***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.

### ***Suggested intercessions***

We pray for the Church, for the world and thank God for his Goodness.

Father God, you are our beginning and our end. You were with us at our birth and remain with us on our life's journey. Be with us at our death. We know that whatever path of life we take, you have chosen us. You love us.

- Just as you chose us, you first chose your amazing disciples.
- The fishermen whose calling we heard our reading today are a powerful example of trust.
- Let us also follow you in faith.



- We thank you that your love will never leave us as we work together as Church in this place.
- We are a small part of your strong community of faithful Christian churches which provide comfort in all parts of your troubled world.

Lord, in your Mercy

### **Hear our Prayer**

Father God, help us, who are called to serve you, live well in our homes, and be enabled to look beyond our sheltering walls.

- Help us as your people of faith to make the roof of our homes wide enough to shelter all opinions.
- Help us to enable our doors to open easily to friends and strangers.
- Help us to set welcoming tables in our homes so that family and guests might speak freely when gathering to break bread.

Lord, in your Mercy

### **Hear our Prayer**

Father, God, we pray for all who need our prayers today. Those who feel adrift in the boat of life.

- Those who have lost dear ones and whose hearts are sad.
  - Those who have lost their health and vitality.
  - Those who have lost their livelihoods
  - Those who have lost opportunities
  - Those who have lost their faith.
- We pray for all those who are wounded on the stormy seas of life, and who feel despair.

May they all feel safe in the harbour of your unending love. May they feel safe from distress and despair and take heart in the knowledge that they are all loved and chosen.

Lord, in your Mercy

### **Hear our Prayer**

Father God, we thank you that we can share the loving, healing and reconciling mission of your Son, Jesus Christ in this age and wherever we are.

- May your spirit make us wise.
- May your spirit guide us.
- May your spirit renew us.
- May your spirit strengthen us.



So that we may be stronger in faith, courageous in witness and persistent in doing the right thing.

**Merciful Father, Accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

***Suggested hymns/songs***

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Follow me

Lord, the light of your love is Shining

Lead us, Heavenly Father Lead us.

James and Andrew, Peter and John, men of temper, talent and tide.

***Activities to accompany the service***

**Drama**

For All Age with young people, you could assemble a pretend boat with chairs in front of the chancel. Then as Worship Leader enact Jesus calling to them, making his invitation.

What does he offer them?

What would they leave behind?

Talk with the children about how Jesus might ask the children as disciples to join him and explore reasons why they may not wish to leave the safety and security of the boat to join a homeless preacher and teacher as he travels far and wide. What would they value? What might they miss? Why did those fishermen accept and leave what they knew?

Jesus must have been an amazing person....

- <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.org/) – in particular ‘Area 52’ for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@lectionary resource)