



Episode 3: Jesus loves the Little Children

In episode 2, about keeping Shabbat, we continued our journey with Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Simon & Andrew, and Matthew – but again we didn't see Jesus until the final moments of the show. We saw how their religious traditions helped them to 'keep the Sabbath holy'. For some of them, however, these traditions had become empty, or, at least, couldn't bring them true fulfilment.

Now, we take a brief break from these characters in order to have a proper chance to meet Jesus – but in rather more childlike company than we might have expected...

Questions for Prayer and Discussion

Some of these questions are very personal. There's no need to say anything aloud unless you're comfortable sharing it. But it is worth sharing with God in prayer...

Jesus is approachable. He welcomes two children kindly, making silly noises to put them at ease. He is amused by their carefree innocence.

Do I find Jesus approachable? Do I think Jesus is only God, and forget that He is truly human too? (Or do I think He is only human and forget that He is God, too...?)

Jesus teaches the children to pray. How am I going to pray this Lent?

We get hints of Jesus' deep interior life. He prays, He struggles, He lives in the presence of His Heavenly Father. He teaches the children about gentleness and compassion. He knows He has a Mission.

What sort of person is Jesus (as depicted in this programme)? Do you think He is like this?

Abigail brings first one friend, Joshua, and then more and more children to meet Jesus. She has made a new friend, and it is natural to share Him with her other friends. Do I find it easy to share Jesus with my friends? What obstacles hinder me from sharing my faith with others?

Jesus invited the children to stay with Him – but He says that He has work to do, and that they have to join in with Him. The children enjoy working with Him, although the work is, in a sense, just an excuse to be in His presence. Do I work in union with Christ? Is my work merely a burden that distracts me, or do I see it as part of building up the Kingdom? How does God sanctify my daily activities?

‘Adults need the faith of children,’ says Jesus to the children. Do they?

Some passages of Scripture you might find useful:

Luke 18:15-17 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Matthew 6:8-13 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

Episode 4: The Rock on which it is built

Simon deals with the consequences of his deal with the Romans, and realises still further the impossibility of his predicament. Matthew becomes more closely involved with Quintus, the Roman praetor: we know it isn't going to end well for him, but Matthew can't help himself. Meanwhile, Nicodemus and the Pharisees have to deal with a new, and decidedly strange character.

Questions for Prayer and Discussion

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Eden's mother (Simon's mother-in-law) falls sick and the timing is really bad. What emotions have you experienced at the sickness of a loved one?

Stress? Anxiety? Sadness? Worry? Frustration? Helplessness?

Were you able to pray about it? Did you experience anything of God's love for you and your loved one? Or did you experience desolation?

'First it was gambling, then it was working... you try to do everything yourself...' Eden thinks that Simon's problem is self-reliance; he should have faith in God.

Do you rely on God?

Do you rely solely on God?

Is self-reliance always or sometimes a bad thing?

Andrew tells Simon that he has seen the 'Lamb of God'. Simon rolls his eyes and turns away. Is this how you would react?

John the Baptist is 'Creepy John', a troublemaker, a nuisance, a threat to political power. Could you follow a person like that?

Will Matthew and Simon end up being friends?

When he's alone on the lake, Simon prays: angrily, honestly, desperately. Can I pray like this?

They fish all night and catch nothing. With Jesus, one catch is miraculous – all they have to do is let out the nets at His word.

This Lent, what is God calling me to do with Him?

'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' Have I ever tried to push God away because I feel unworthy? Is this what God wants?

‘Follow Me.’ Do you understand how Simon (& Andrew, James, & John) can drop everything and follow Him?

Have I resolved to follow Him? What do I need to let go of to follow Him better?

Luke 5:1-11 While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to

Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Fr Richard Rohr reflects on this Biblical story:

Immediately after he begins his preaching, Jesus calls his first four disciples. The way I see people transformed today sure doesn't happen this quickly. Jesus just says, “Follow me” and immediately they left their nets and followed him (Matthew 4:20). Now, maybe it happened that way; I don't want to say it didn't. But what I do want to say is that a true disciple will have that kind of readiness. I'd be more likely to think that this was maybe a process of some conversations over a few weeks. And Jesus said, “Hey, I'm into something. Do you want to be a part of it? Let's go.”

I hope we realize that we're all called to discipleship the same way. We hope that the point comes when we're ready to let go of our nets. What are our nets? Our security systems. Fishing is Simon and Andrew's economic livelihood, and Jesus says to let go of it. He says, “I'm going to teach you how to fish in a new way, to fish for people” (Matthew 4:19). What he means is that he's going to give them a new vocation. What is God asking us to do? Where is God asking us to go?