



Invited

LENT 2021

Episode Four: Called

Welcome to week four of Invited; we come to a point where we may choose to respond to all the good news that we have heard so far. We are Invited into a relationship of love, and love is a choice. We choose to do certain things for the people we love. What will we do for the God who loves us?

Our speakers this week help us to explore what it means to live your life for God, the sense of purpose that it gives us, and the fruits that this brings. We begin with Fr David King, Parish Priest at Holy Name parish in Esher.

Guest Speaker – Fr David King

Hey everyone, it's really lovely to be with you for this fourth session of this mission of Arundel & Brighton - Invited.

When I was a boy, I used to love reading Tintin books. I don't know if you've heard of Tintin, but he was my absolute hero when I was a boy. My dad was a fan of his books so we had all of the comic books, the graphic novels at home, and a perfect evening for me was being tucked up in bed reading, reading a Tintin book. I know that's really tragic but there you go, that's what it was like !

I used to love these books because Tintin was always having these amazing adventures around the world. He used to go to different parts of the world and, all the time he had this incredible sense of mission and purpose whether he was uncovering injustice in the world, solving crimes or exposing an evil gang somewhere.

I was so jealous of him going on all of these adventures and so jealous of his sense of mission and purpose. For those of you that don't know Tintin, he was a young journalist - so, that's what he was doing and writing about all of these things in his newspaper. There's a standing joke in my family that I got all of my general knowledge from reading Tintin books which to be honest, is probably true !

I want you to know, everybody, all of you watching this tonight, that we all have a massive purpose and mission in life - I was reading those books as a young boy thinking 'yeah I

want to be like that. I want to have a sense of purpose in my life, I want to have that same sense of mission and also a sense of adventure.'

And I want to tell you that we do, each one of us, have that in our lives - a sense of mission, a sense of purpose, and the sense of adventure, that is exactly what I'm going to be talking to you about this evening.

So, let's just reflect for a moment on the story of the Bible, because before we talk about what our purpose is. It's important to reflect on how God calls each one of us to partner with him in bringing about good things in the world. If you look at the story of the Bible it's not a story of God standing back from afar, and just zapping the world, and making things happen in the world, that's not how God works.

God calls people and commissions them for a particular task and a particular mission, and it's when God and humanity start cooperating and when we partner with God, that's when good things begin to happen in the world. You don't need me to list all of these people that God has called through the story of the Bible into action - He called Abraham to join into the promised land, He called Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt back to the promised land, He called David, He called Samuel, He called Ruth.

My favourite, of course, my *favourite* person that he calls, is Jonah.

Jonah is my favourite person in the Bible, apart from Jesus of course; the first line of that whole book is just so wonderful.

The first line is the Lord saying to Jonah, "Jonah get up. Stand up and go to Nineveh, because lots of awful things are happening in that city and I need you to speak my word against what's happening". And Jonah gets up and he just runs in exactly the opposite direction! I've got this great image in my head of God going "Hey Jonah, come back!"

I mean, that's a very human reaction and thank God that book of Jonah is in the Bible - I think we all feel like that sometimes. Sometimes it is a scary thing when God calls us to a particular purpose and mission. Sometimes I feel that resistance, I feel that nervousness, that sometimes that's not exactly what I want to do.

But nevertheless, that is absolutely what God has called us to, he's called us to partner with him.

So let's just recap on the story thus far. And then we can look at what our purpose and mission is. In week one of this mission we talked about God's love and how that love is bound to us, the covenantal love, God is bound to us this. He cannot *not* love us, it is a love that is bound, and of course the love that brought forth this beautiful creation. Just as love and creation always go together.

But then in week two, we looked at how, through human pride, lots of awful things entered into the world; greed, injustice evil sin, death, decay, all of these things mistakenly entered into creation which spoiled this beautiful world that God had made.

As you remember, Fr Thomas in week two pointed out that we have that verse in Genesis chapter three, in which God promises to send a son of Eve, someone who is going to sort out this mess, someone who is going to rescue and redeem the world from all of these awful things that entered into it.

And funny enough - here is bit of theology for you - we call that verse, Genesis, 3:15, we call that verse the *Proto Evangelii*, and that means the first gospel, because it's in that verse that we get the first hint of God sending a rescuer, a son of Eve.

Then, of course, in week three we looked at that rescuer, the saviour Jesus and how through His birth, His life, His teaching, His death and resurrection, He has bought about the redemption of the world from all of these things, which in time will be put under his feet.

But, and this is the crucial thing - God just doesn't leave us to be passive bystanders in this, in this work of redeeming creation. He calls us to participate in this mission, in this plan.

To get to the heart of the matter we need to talk about baptism.

So, these days when we baptise as an infant or indeed an adult, we generally just pour water over their head three times - you may know that in the early Church they used to fully immerse someone under the waters of a flowing river, and that this symbol was initially a violent symbol, it was supposed to symbolise somebody's death - they're drowning, that's the moment when we enter into the tomb with Jesus - and we participate with Jesus in His death. That's our Good Friday moment, if you like.

It's only when we understand this, that we understand the full significance of being lifted up out of those waters, of being raised out of the waters. That's the moment when we are literally re-birthed out of those waters into a new life. That's the moment we participate with Jesus in His resurrection.

And we are born into a new life, a life of course in which we have been wrapped in Jesus, in which we have been clothed in Jesus, we have been grafted onto Jesus and crucially, of course, in baptism, we have been called to follow him.

That is what baptism gives us - a new mission in life, a new vocation to be Jesus's followers, to be his disciples, to be Christians, and the full sense of that word, not in the meaningless empty label sense of that word.

That's what I want to put to you tonight.

Every single one of you watching this, *this* is the mission, and the purpose that you have in life. If you've been baptised you received in that moment a vocation to be a disciple of Jesus, to be his follower. And if you haven't been baptised then get baptised; absolutely!

That, in my mind, and I hope in your mind, begs this big question (well it *should* beg this big question) - why does Jesus call us to follow him? Why does he call us to be his disciples?

Now that is a wonderful question. And I have three things that I would like to say in response to it.

First of all, just yesterday I was reading a passage from Mark's gospel, and Mark's Gospel is a wonderful gospel. Mark is much more interested in what Jesus does rather than what he says. There are none of the long speeches that Jesus makes in Mark - like he does in John or Matthew. Mark is an action-packed gospel full of Jesus' actions.

Right after his announcement that the kingdom of God is arriving, Jesus embarks on lots of healings - these are beautiful healings and at the end of chapter six, we get this little passage here:

“When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boats, and they got out of the boats, people at once recognised him and rushed about that whole region, and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or towns or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him, that they might touch, even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.”

If you have even touched, even just the hem of Jesus's garment you will know what incredible healing that brings to our lives. To touch Jesus is to touch goodness. It is to touch joy. It is to touch hope. It is to be healed. And that is just the hem of His garment.

And I cannot say anything more than that.

That is why Jesus calls us to follow him, that through Him, we might find life.

There are some beautiful quotes that I hang on to in John's Gospel, I love these quotes because for me they typify what Jesus is all about.

In chapter 10 he says, “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full”.

In chapter 14 he says “Peace I give to you, my own peace I leave you. Peace that the world cannot give. This is my gift to you”.

And then one chapter later, in chapter 15 He says “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and your joy be complete”.

Jesus did not come to make your life more boring, he did not come to fill your life with rules. He came to bring you life, joy, peace, to fill your life with good things and all of the things that in the deepest part of our hearts we are looking for, we will find it in Him.

There is another reason why Jesus calls us to follow him.

About 150 years ago, there was a very young Dutch Catholic priest. His name was Damien. He joined a missionary order and the order sent him to Hawaii in the Pacific.

At that time, Hawaii had a real problem with Hansen's disease which is more commonly known as leprosy and the authorities feared - or they perceived - this disease to be very contagious, and they were therefore very worried and nervous about it all.

Funnily enough leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is not quite as contagious as everybody thinks it is, nevertheless it *is* contagious. So the authorities had put all of the people with leprosy on this island called Molokai. Damien was in Hawaii and the area for a while, and after a while he felt he felt convicted to go there.

He felt called to serve there to be with this people, so he asked the authorities and he asked his order, and they gave him permission to go. So after a while he went and lived with that people on the island of Molokai.

Damien partnered with all of the people there in bringing about a great transformation to that island. He built a Church, he celebrated the sacraments for them. He built schools and hospitals, he taught people to farm the land so that they could grow food. He taught them to pray, taught them all about Jesus. When they were sick, he anointed them. When they died, he dug graves and buried them.

He lived with them and shared in their lives and what did he do? What Damien did was he bought a little slice of heaven, down to a place that other people would have considered hell.

He took the love of Jesus there and he implicitly knew what Jesus was calling him to do.

You know what, St Paul calls the Church the body of Christ, and Christ, of course, is not Jesus' surname - Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah.

So Paul says the church is the Messiah, his body. The Messiah's body that means we are Jesus' eyes and ears, we are Jesus' hands and feet. That is we are called to carry on the work of Jesus. We are called to give, to be compassionate, and to act with mercy and compassion, to practice justice in the world.

And these are the people that really, really, inspire me and my faith.

Of course, Damien of Molokai became St Damian of Molokai. Pope Benedict canonized him in 2009, and he is the patron saint of Hawaii and Honolulu.

But he's not the only one, so many - Dorothy Day the servant of God who was tramping the streets of New York in the 50s and 60s, feeding people on the breadline and fighting for the rights of ordinary people and ordinary workers who were being completely exploited at the time, St. Teresa of Calcutta who brought Jesus' love to the streets of India.

These are the people who answered Jesus's call and implicitly knew that Jesus had called them to bring the kingdom of God to earth. Don't forget that was Jesus's prayer, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

I want to end on a personal note, because following Jesus is not necessarily an easy thing to do, and actually Eleanor will be talking about that more next week. She will be talking about what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus in our ordinary lives.

But being a disciple of Jesus is not necessarily easy and Jesus himself says that, that it won't be easy. In the Sermon on the Mount, which I absolutely love, is Jesus's vision for how we ought to live with each other. He says the road is easy and the gate is wide that that leads to nowhere, and there are many people who take that path.

The gate is narrow, and the word is hard, that leads to life. And there were few who find it.

So it is a difficult journey, being a disciple of Jesus, but I can honestly say, sitting here and with every bone in my body, that has been the greatest adventure of my entire life and I call upon each one of you to *hear* Jesus, who is calling *you* to follow him, calling *you* to be a disciple for your own sake and for the sake of the world.

I think that's pretty much all I wanted to say to you this evening, I really hope that you've had a wonderful time on this Invited mission. I want to leave the last word to Pope Francis.

In about 2018, he wrote this apostolic exhortation it's called *Gaudete Exultate* and it's all about holiness. In it, Pope Francis was redefining what it is to be holy, saying it's not some kind of external show of piety, but rather it's finding the person that you really are and living life as that person, he says this:

“You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ and can only be understood through Him”.

God bless you all, it's been a pleasure to be with you this evening.

Personal Testimony – Theresa McNamara (Question and answer format)

Interviewer: So, Theresa we've just heard Father David talking about people being baptised into the faith, tell us, were you baptised as an infant and were you raised as a Catholic?

'Yes. Proud cradle Catholic, Catholic on both sides - my mum and my dad. And that's something that, all jokes aside, I am quite proud of; the fact that we worshipped together every Sunday all through childhood and growing up. I'm incredibly thankful that I was baptised as an infant, and they led me and my sisters through the rest of our sacraments growing up. That's something that I hold very dear and it's something that's definitely influenced the way we are with our children, and the way I am with my children.

There's this wonderful phrase I think that I heard somewhere - a lot of what I use as my testimony has been pinched from other people's testimonies - when I think 'oh that that really speaks to me.' One of my favourites is probably where someone was speaking once, it really resonated with me when they said '*knowing* Jesus' - a lot of testimonies come from the standpoint of someone saying, oh I first found my relationship with Jesus or got to know Jesus when ... whereas my testimony definitely starts with - I *know* Jesus in the way that I know my two older siblings, in that they have always been a part of my life, I've always known that they're there. Sometimes there's been fractious relationships growing up but all in all, I *know* them and I love them and I know that they love me. It's similar with my relationship with Jesus, there's never been a time where I've not known that he's there and have not known his love for me and that I've loved him being in my life.

So, yes, I'm very grateful to my parents for raising us in the faith'.

Interviewer: That's beautiful, that's absolutely beautiful. And so, were you always aware of the sense of mission and vocation, that Jesus had for your life - a particular calling?

'I don't think so. I was about 17, I had always been very active in my faith, but when I was 17 I had a couple of different opportunities presented to me, which were definitely guided by the grace of God, there was definite purpose in me taking up these opportunities, and they both had a really big impact on my own faith and my understanding of my mission in life.

The first was when I first went to Lourdes. It's quite a standard Catholic testimony I think, Lourdes is usually a defining moment for most people, and for me it definitely was. It was the first time that I'd gone and I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for. We were there at Easter, with the charity HCPT and I remember this one moment - I can remember this moment, clear as day and I think most people, if you've had an experience of the Holy Spirit working in you, you remember it so clearly - like it happened yesterday. That's definitely the case with this - I was sat on the opposite side of the river, looking at the Grotto, and it was the one moment in the whole week which I had to myself. I'd actually picked up the Lourdes flu, 'Lourdes lurgy' so was feeling pretty sorry for myself, and I was sat opposite the Grotto and I just felt something go through me. I was so overwhelmed with God's love for me, and I just sat and wept for I don't know how long, and I was really moved by that, it was a really transformational moment for me.

Later on in that year I was invited to take part in an ecumenical children's holiday camp, over the summer holidays and I had a similar experience, but this time, rather than a feeling or an emotion that came over me - it was my first real experience of worship music, and that again has had a big influence on me and my own prayer life - rather than being filled with God's love and an emotion, I was filled with the knowledge that I should work with children, and that that's what I should do with my life.

At that point in time I was quite cross about that! I was a 17 year-old who was full of ambition for a life on the stage - I was going to become an actress, and work in the

West End, that was my ideal version of my future. But I was just filled with this knowledge that no, that's not the direction I should go down, I should be working with children'.

Interviewer: What were the next steps then, how did you follow that up?

'So ... I didn't really know what to do with that, so kind of parked it for the time being. I was aware of it and I did end up changing the courses that I was signing up for at university. I put drama to one side and studied theology at university and I loved that.

My faith has really become a very academic faith, as strange as that may sound. I love finding out the history and the background to our wonderful, wonderful faith, and knowing the ins and outs of our faith and the ins and outs of which Gospel is relating to which Old Testament passage and the meaning and the significance behind that. I had a wonderful time at university, and made some really amazing lifelong friends, and they have strengthened my faith over the years as well'.

Interviewer: And you met one *particular* person, didn't you?

'That particular person was my husband, Dan; we met while at St Mary's in Twickenham, and, as they say, the rest is history! It is a strange thing to look back at those times, isn't it? because I look back at that time and it's just our life together - from that moment of meeting one another and you know, taking it day by day to see where things go. So many things have then fallen into place from those previous steps of ours. If it hadn't been for meeting Dan then I, in all likelihood, would have moved home immediately after university, I would have probably moved back in with my parents for a while trying to find work, etc, etc. But because Dan was in the year below me at university, I ended up staying in Twickenham and then we ended up staying in Twickenham together for slightly longer.

And while I was there, because he was still at university, I needed to find a job. I just so happened to kind of stumble across a job advert for school chaplain, and as I say it wasn't something that I'd ever really considered - it wasn't something that I had a big pull towards - but I applied for it, and I got it, and I'm so, so grateful that that was the place that God led me, because it definitely is what I meant to be doing, and I've come to realise that more and more over the years, that this is 100% what I'm meant to be doing with my work.

On top of all of that Dan and I have now ended up with two absolutely beautiful children that have been a huge source of joy and purpose in our life, especially over the last year - where it could have been quite drab - we've got two absolutely crazy children running around the place, bringing endless amounts of humour and fun; we've had a really blessed year, just getting to spend more time with them'.

Interviewer: That's fantastic. That's beautiful. Did you have any 'Jonah moments', did you ever have a time when you thought 'gosh I'm running the other way?'

'That's a really great question. I don't actually think that I have. The main reason why I say that, though, is because I think God's been quite sneaky with me in that there's never actually been a time where God said right "have a sit down, this is what you're going to go and do now" What God's done with me is he's just put me in places and he's just put me in situations, and then let me work it out for myself that that's where I'm meant to be. And so I'm really lucky, maybe he knows me too well. Maybe he knows that if he did say right this is what you're going to do next that I would be like Jonah and being like 'No, No chance!' But instead, I'm just very grateful that he's just led me, where I'm meant to be so rather than feeling like I'm being pulled or asked to do something, it kind of feels like I'm gently wading along the path that God set for me. I don't know, maybe in time to come my testimony will be very different and I'll be saying, Yes, there is something that I'm running away from but so far I think I've been quite lucky in that I haven't had that experience yet'.

Interviewer: So there have been lots of mini yes's along the way, haven't there, with your journey? What would you say to someone who was feeling that they were a bit afraid, if they start saying yes to God, where that journey might take them?

'It's always going to be scary to take on something where you don't know the outcome. That's always going to be a source of anxiety, but - when you are saying yes to God we can be confident in what that outcome will be, because that outcome is going to be a life that is full of joy. A life that is full - as Fr David was saying - its living your life to the full. That's not to say that you're going to be out, you know, skydiving or swimming with sharks. It's finding the joy in in the many things that happen on a daily basis, and finding your life is full, regardless of what you're actually doing.

It doesn't matter what you're doing, your life is full because of who you're living it for, you're no longer living it for yourself, you're living it for God - and to be his presence on earth today. There is no need to be afraid because we know that that outcome can only be a good thing; no matter where it takes you, it will take you to a place of joy.'

Prayer



We come to you Father as your precious children knowing that you love us unconditionally.

We thank you for the gift of life, and we pray that we may become more aware of your guiding hand, so that we may live out the purpose that you created us for.

Be with us as we seek to spread your good news and reach out in love to all those around us.

Reflection Questions

- Am I aware of the sense of mission that has been placed on my life?
- In what ways am I/can I be Jesus' hands and feet here on earth?
- If I sometimes feel like Jonah, what is it that worries me about partnering with God?

Fr David spoke of reaching out in faith to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, and finding all that we are looking for in Him. Imagine yourself in the crowd reaching out, knowing that you will receive his healing love.

Conversation

John 12:20-33

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

'Now the hour has come
for the Son of Man to be glorified.
I tell you, most solemnly,
unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies,

it remains only a single grain;
but if it dies,
it yields a rich harvest.
Anyone who loves his life loses it;
anyone who hates his life in this world
will keep it for the eternal life.
If a man serves me, he must follow me,
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.
Now my soul is troubled.
What shall I say:
Father, save me from this hour?
But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour.
Father, glorify your name!

A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him.' Jesus answered, 'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.'

'Now sentence is being passed on this world;
now the prince of this world is to be overthrown.
And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all men to myself.'

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

- Was there a phrase or word that spoke to you particularly when you listened to the Gospel reading?
- 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' In my life, what needs to fall into the earth and die in order for me to bear much fruit?
- 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Is there someone in your life you would like to bring to meet Jesus? How can you go about this?

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God bless,

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