

Sunday, January 15, 2023 Epiphany 2 ***“Following in the Light”***

Isaiah 49: 1-7 John 1: 29-42

How many of you have ever been in a foggy or snowy situation where visibility was very poor? Living in Canada this happens quite regularly throughout the year. One minute you might be driving on clear roads with sunshine and just a few km down the road you are in a blizzard or cannot see because of fog. And just as before you see a break in the storm or fog and what is seen is a welcomed sight! The light of the sun! no more white knuckles on the steering wheel and you can finally let out your breath which you held while driving through the storm. The light up the road made a difference as you drove. But what often happens is that people do not see the light as they drive and they become confused or just follow the vehicle in front as they too have lights. So what is a driver to do? Take it calm, be safe and pull off the road if you cannot see. But do we want to do this? No we think we can follow the road because of memory and just sheer desire to do so.

Last Sunday we read the story of Jesus’ baptism and as you might recall that when Jesus came up out of the water of the Jordan River, the heavens opened up with a bright light, a dove descended upon Jesus and the voice of God spoke so that all who were there heard his voice. His voice was clear when he said, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” The light of the sky was upon Jesus and having been baptized Jesus was now fully ready to begin his task and life’s purpose. But where does Jesus ministry begin? And for those of us who are keen to learn about Jesus’ life we must look to see what the prophet Isaiah states about the Promised one of God, the one born to save His people.

We read in Isaiah 49 about the servant Isaiah who was called to serve even before he was born. Isaiah also wrote about God’s servant would be called to gather God’s people around him and to honour him because this servant would save the people. Salvation will reach to the ends of the earth—all through this Servant. Isaiah states that God’s Son will be despised by those in power but they will eventually bow down because has chosen the One who will lead his people. This Promised One is Jesus.

So how does Jesus move from his baptism scene to become the Saviour? What is it about Jesus that people are drawn to him? John the Baptist was preaching a message for repentance when he saw Jesus coming toward him. He declares “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.” I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason; that he might be revealed to Israel.” Well in this introduction, Jesus is introduced by John. John knows Jesus’ history—how their mothers had them and raised them to be faithful men. They may not have known each other that well- Jesus was raised in Nazareth and John was raised by Zechariah and Elizabeth. John followed his father in working as a priest but later became an itinerant preacher whose message was of repentance. He fulfilled the prophecy of preparing the way for Jesus. He lead the way for people to follow but in this moment, he steps back and honours Jesus for who he is.

He tells his listeners and followers: “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remains is the who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and have testified that is the Son of God.” So Jesus, gives a big wave and we don’t know what happens after this moment. Did the crowd back away or draw closer? Did the people ask questions or shy away? Did they understand John’s reference of “Lamb of God” or did they get what occurred when the descending dove went over Jesus? We don’t know but what if you had been there at the Jordan River that day and you were a witness to this? Would you have understood? OR would you have wanted to see the replay?

John states that his purpose is to prepare the people for the coming one, the one who was to come after him and by John’s statement that he is not worthy to until the thong o fhis sandal. John’s mission is to prepare the people and then point them to Jesus. John had his own following and now he was to let go and let Jesus the Son of God carry on. So what is Jesus’ next steps?

The next day John was standing with two of his disciples when he watched Jesus go by. He tells his followers, here is the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard him say this and they

followed Jesus. Jesus turned around as he kept on walking and asked, “What are you looking for? They said, “Rabbi where are you staying. He told them Come and see. They went with him and they remained with him that day as it was about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. This man Andrew followed Jesus. He then found his brother Simon Peter and told him “We have found the Messiah”. Andrew takes him to Jesus and when Jesus looks at him he says, “You are Simon son of John You are to be called Cephas or Peter.

So what has Jesus done so far? Nothing! His reputation and the story of his baptism has preceded him. John introduced him twice as the Son of God and people heard this. John told Andrew and he follows Jesus because of what John said. Andrew finds his brother, tells him about Jesus and Simon Peter follows as well. They follow Jesus. Why? Because he is the One whom God called his beloved Son. He is the one whom John preached about and they believed. He is the one called the Messiah, the promised one of God to save His people.

Like these first disciples, we are called to follow, move and to change. We are still invited into this call of serving, response and to follow. What is it that we are called to do as we respond to the message of Christ’s love for us all? WE are called to follow—that is not tell Jesus what we are going to do, but let Jesus lead us. He is the one who will walk the path first; he is the one who leads us into life’s everyday challenges and choices. He is the one who is the Light in these days and nights of darkness when we don’t know which way to go. He is the one whose light shines in fog, snow, and even the clouding of our minds and eyes to see what is right before us. Jesus calls us to follow him.

Andrews and Simon Peter just did it—they followed; they talked they listened and there was no contract or agreement or anything. They believed what John the Baptist had said about him. They believed that God would send a Messiah because they knew the prophetic scriptures and they knew what was to happen; they believed that the One who walked toward them and then in front of them would lead them to a new life and most of all to have hope.

Over 275 years ago, John Wesley wrote the Covenant which we shall share in a few moments. This covenant enabled the people to express their New Year’s resolution as a Faith Statement upon which people have committed themselves, and renewed their faith so that

each new year they would be reminded that they are followers of Jesus. That they are not the focus of the ministry of the church; that they and we are not the focus of our Christian faith- but Jesus is because of what he has done through his death and resurrection. As we share in these words of John Wesley we renew our faith. By sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion we do as Jesus asked, in remembrance of him.

During this season of Epiphany we will continue to ask that question as we seek Light in the Darkness of our minds and hearts; as the darkness of these winter days leads us to the joy of new life and as our understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, and Messiah becomes clearer in our hearts and minds. So the question is simply are you willing to follow in the light of Christ?

The light of Christ has come into our world; but what about your world and you? Are you following Jesus' lead or wandering off the path to somewhere else? Are you seeing the light of life as you continue to do what you do or are you following God's path and see the light.

Let us pray

God of grace and love we praise you for you promised us Jesus and gave us your beloved Son. Help us now to follow in faith and with hope. Open our hearts and minds as we respond to your call to serve and to do so with love. We ask in Jesus name. Amen