

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Isaiah 9:1-4

I Corinthians 1: 10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

Called to Work Together

How many of you have ever climbed up a lighthouse or have seen a lighthouse close up? There is something amazing and nostalgic about a lighthouse because of its construction with a series of stairs going up to the top where there was a huge light with mirrors. The lighthouse keepers' function was to keep the light lit at all times because the light would help sailors find their way and not end up lost at sea or shipwrecked because of dangerous rocks or currents. These lights would aid in the navigation from the open sea to a safe shore landing. Therefore it was imperative that the lamp remain lit—at night and in times of fog or heavy winds and storms.

Lighthouses were usually built in areas where there were particular marine hazards such as dangerous rock or cliffs, to mark an entrance to a bay or to even allow sailors to determine their positions at night. Lighthouse keepers often rescued sailors in distress following storms and shipwrecks. Not all lighthouses work the same way in years past or even today. They may or may not have a unique time interval and there are only a few patterns in use. The lights may also be in different colours or patterns in different areas so that one can tell whether you are on the safe side of the light. Is red from the south or white from the east. Traditional lighthouses often have a rotating mirror around a fixed light so that the lighthouse sends a rotating beam of light.

But with today's electronic navigation being carried out by sailors and the cost and maintenance of some of these historic structures escalating, many areas around the world are phasing out their use or replacing them with automated lights. Most often today's lighthouse is usually just one light on an electronic timer.

Our reading from Isaiah 9 is a portion of what is often shared during advent as we prepare to welcome Jesus as the newborn King. This child to be born will be called wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. But it is the first part of this passage which we reflect on—the people have been walking in darkness and have seen a great light. A light has dawned upon those who live in the shadow of death. A light shines. As followers of Jesus Christ we believe that this light that shines is the son of God, the one who came to seek and save those who were lost and the One upon whom our church identifies as its head. Jesus is this light and through him we need not fear being in the dark again.

Like the lighthouse with its beams shining way out into the open sea, Jesus' light shines out to the world only if we acknowledge Christ within us as individuals and as a church committed to the ministry and mission of Jesus.

We sing that Christ's light is shining in the midst of the darkness and we have prayed that Jesus' light will shine upon us so that we can reflect his presence in our lives and tell others of his wonderful love. The question that we need to ask is do we believe this? Do we as a church family believe that Christ's light—his Spirit, his presence is in our midst and in us? And are we like a lighthouse shining that light out into the neighbourhood and into our city? In conversation with others do people know that you are a part of this church family at Glenwood and that you are working with our whole church family to enable Christ's light to touch others? We need to be reminded that we reflect Christ's light and to ensure that Christ is first in our church.

Matthew connects Jesus with Isaiah's message about the saving love of God, As Christians we associate the promise of 'a new light' with Jesus, because Jesus is the Prince of peace.' In this story of the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4), Jesus learns that John the Baptist had been put in prison and so he returned to Galilee and in order to fulfil prophecy, Jesus lived in the area between Zebulun and Naphtali and he preached the message of Repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was near.

While walking along the Sea of Galilee Simon Peter and Andrew were casting nets into the lake and Jesus spoke to them. "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men- and women. At once they followed him. Two other brothers- James and John, sons of Zebedee were in their boat and preparing nets. He called to them also and immediately they left the boat and father and followed Jesus.

These disciples don't seem to hesitate or struggle with following Jesus. They immediately put down their nets and follow Jesus. So why do we struggle with this decision? Are we skeptical, unsure of our faith in Jesus, or are we to stick to where we want to be and need to be? We hesitate even to respond to some small tasks others ask of us. This is also because an awareness of the call to follow Jesus and become His disciples comes not in a dramatic way, but in the gradual unfolding of events and experiences.

Think about this for a moment. When did you first hear about Jesus? As a child, a teenager or as an adult? We must give glory to God if you heard about Jesus' love when you were a child- because fewer children today hear the story of this infant king unless a special effort is made by families and extended families. It is also known that if an individual hears the story of Jesus at a younger age, they are most likely to commit to Christ before their adult years. There are exceptions but as the community outside these walls becomes more secular, we need to understand who we are as Jesus' followers and to stand firmly as to what it means to be Christian..

In the next few weeks we will be exploring what hearing Jesus' call to follow means for you at this time. Consider how you might reframe or re-imagine the way you hear Jesus' call to follow. The call to follow is not just a one-time event—it is a choice we make each day and often with each task we do. For how we hear this call, helps us to unfold the actions we undertake, the words we speak and even the invitation we share with others to answer Jesus' call as we extend the good news of salvation and hope to others.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John answered Jesus' simple call of 'follow me' by immediately putting down the tools of their trade—fishing nets. They got out of the boat and walked with Jesus. They believed they were going to see amazing things happen with Jesus and they were willing to work with Jesus to accomplish his purpose. They came to know him as the messiah sent from God, they just needed to grow in their faith and believe that the Promised one was this man who preached, healed and taught all who heard him about God and his love. They needed to believe it in their hearts that Jesus had called them to reach out to others. This too is the case for many of us living today.. why did God call you? You have faith, you have the abilities and God has gifted you with talents and abilities to share with others what Jesus has done in your life and how you experience the Spirit moving not only in you but in your church—our church, what we call our church family.

Are you following Christ's call to share His light? As part of this church family we look after and maintain this church building, yet it is more than this—for Christ's light is shining upon us now and we are called to follow Jesus and reflect His light and more. We are called to work together in the name of Christ Jesus our saviour and lord. Are you willing?

Edward Everett Hall (1822-1919) states, "I am only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. The something I ought to do, I can do. And by the grace of God, I will." You have received Christ's call to serve. You can't do it all and neither can I; but together we can shine Christ's light into the heart of South Windsor by living and loving others in Christ's name. We are called to work together to do this? Are you willing? Come the invitation still stands, Follow Christ.

PRAYER

Loving God we praise you that the invitation to live and follow Christ remains open. We have answered this call throughout our lives and yet as we reflect upon your love for us in this moment we are compelled to praise and offer you thanks. Help us to work together, to share our ideas, our gifts and our time so that all may be one as we share Christ's light in love. Hear us O God we pray. SILENCE Amen.