

Sunday, June 23, 2019

Hebrews 13:1-6

Luke 9:23-24

The Cost of Discipleship

Five youth who were baptized as infants in five different churches (not Glenwood Church) are here together on this important day in their lives. They represent five different schools, have five different main interests and are here today to share with you and to be welcomed by you because of what we have in common. We are a part of God's creation, redeemed through Jesus' death and resurrection and await the Spirit to continue to lead our lives. These young people have faith and believe this and they know that what they do today enables them to soar knowing that God is watching over them and guiding them each step of their life.

It is a day of celebration because we are here to welcome into full membership five young people who have been a part of this church family =some longer than others- but all want to be a part of this church family and to do what God calls them to do throughout their lives. Two of them are almost completed Grade 9 and have experienced the big gap of being a big fish in a smaller school to now being one of many. Three of them have completed Grade 8 with the excitement of a grad trip behind them and the wonder and worry of what high school will be like ahead of them. Yet this group has pulled together to not only talk about school, but mostly listened and asked questions about what has brought them to this place we call Glenwood United Church. Some of them have known each other since they were little and starting school, others have come because of friendships and moving into the area of the city. Yet we are here together to rejoice and praise God for they will profess their faith and are willing to serve Jesus Christ our Saviour as Christians in this church family we call Glenwood United Church.

We celebrate this as a church because this is what our purpose is coming into reality. We start instructing children at an early age to love God and Jesus and to know that the Spirit is with them. We continue these Sunday teachings and pray that the seeds of faith taught in the Bible stories of the OT and NT will sprout and grow and cause questions to be asked and prayerfully answered. And this is what we celebrate= the beginning of a commitment to Christ Jesus in this church and to be recognized as young men and young women who have many gifts to share and want to share them.

We read in Luke 9 that to follow Jesus includes denying themselves and taking up the cross of Christ. This means that life is no longer about me but about what I can do for Jesus' sake. It means that

being a disciple of Jesus costs us our lives yet what we receive is life eternal with our creator and Saviour. As people we come into the world and through instruction from one generation to another we learn about our life and its purpose. We are to love others as Jesus taught and to live being loved by others. To understand this we need to fully give and receive love at the same time. But we will not do this task of loving others alone.

As the writer of Hebrews states we are not given this task to love others in isolation but we need to be reminded again and again that we are never alone or forsaken. God promised us that He is will always be with us- we need to trust this. No matter what situations or circumstances come our way, we cannot feel dismayed because God is with us wherever we go.

As these young people begin and continue their high school education they share many dreams of what they might want to do or become and even these ideas are just that ideas- They are not sure but we need only be reminded that as humans we play a role in our future yet God leads us if we truly have faith. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this. We read in Jeremiah 29:11 "for surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." And this is the most profound part of this.. We know that the future is wide open for these young people. Today they are professing their faith in Jesus and their future becomes Christ-centred for as they profess their faith, they also receive a precious gift from God- hope. Hope beyond this world and yet hope for this world and their role in it.

As we rejoice together as a family of God we must praise Him! For today the work that was begun in their childhood has come forward so that they will profess their faith beliefs and celebrate these new disciples of Jesus. As we worship each week, we enable the Spirit of God to touch the hearts of all who worship and share in the ministry which is ours together and we see the presence of Christ Jesus within others to be experienced. Yes we might accept Jesus as our Saviour but until God's Spirit leads us to serve others we might not fully know who we are.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ today is both easier and more difficult than even 10 years ago. Easier because we see many people living out their faith by what they wear and how they present themselves in our multi-faith city. More difficult because we need to articulate what we believe about God, His Son Jesus and the Spirit and how this sparks us into action. We cannot just say I am a Christian and assume that we are people of faith on the same level of Commitment to Christ and his church. We need the words shared with others as we articulate faith and how important it is in our everyday life..

These young people know what it means to share one's faith- their close friends are of various backgrounds, ethnicities and different faiths. And they are not afraid to tell you that they are in a growing relationship with Jesus. The cost of discipleship is being able to do what they feel called to do in their school, church and family. It means committing themselves to be regularly active in what they now know and feel is important. Learning more about God's love is important to them and how to apply this learning to working in the school and elsewhere where their faith may be tested.

Albert, Clara, Gabby, Joe and Kelsey we give thanks that you are ready to profess your faith and that you will commit your lives to the service of Jesus Christ. We praise God that you are willing to offer yourselves as individuals who have and will continue to serve Christ's church with grace and truth. Remember always that no matter what happens God is with you and you can pray to him in whatever way you feel comfortable. To pray is to offer yourself- your thoughts, concerns, beliefs and wonder to God for the potential to draw closer to the One who made you, died and rose for you and whose Spirit will always be with you. God is with you now and always. Amen.

Let us pray;

God of grace hear our prayers as we prepare for these special moments in the lives of these your people. Bless their parents and bless us all as we renew our faith and commitment to you. Hear these our prayers. SILENCE. Amen.