

Sunday, November 13, 2022 Pentecost 23 ***“Deep- Bold- Daring”***

Isaiah 65:17-25 | Corinthians 12: 1-11 | John 2:1-11

In 2021 the United Church national leaders held several zoom consultations across the country for the purpose of hearing what is important to the people within the church and what might be deemed an essential part of the vision of the church until 2025. The United Church of Canada will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2025. With an Act of Parliament, Methodist, Congregational and many Presbyterian churches came together to form the United Church of Canada a unique ecclesial structure bringing together people of faith into one larger group. Although its roots began between the wars, this church has grown into its own identity and is much different than when it was founded. These consultations resulted in the General Council leaders to write what is known as the New Purpose Statement and the words are located on the back of your worship announcements. It has 3 key phrases: Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship and Daring Justice offer for us a personal faith experience and our witness as the church of Jesus Christ today. But what unites these key phrases is that we are called by God as disciples of Jesus and what we as a church are seeking to be and become.

Many people have served the church diligently and well throughout their lives but what has raised concerns amongst leadership and ministers is how we might think everyone reads the Bible and prays every day. But what if this was not shared or talked about at the individual level?

Deep Spirituality- is the action of drawing close to God. In worship we do this as a church family or congregation. But what tools do we each have to do it privately. Prayer is foundational to opening our hearts and lives to God. Prayer may be with words or music, dance or through other forms. For some people, it is solitude or sitting in nature. For others it is quieting and settling themselves with tools of meditation, with adult colouring activities, or even journaling. But for people connected to a United Church what often is help most close to our hearts is what we do when we worship. It is this experience that forms people to be dedicated to serving the church in some way or many ways. But if we are to deepen the personal relationships with God how might we do this effectively? IT might be through praying

or group study and this needs to be further explored again for we, in Glenwood Church have and will continue to do this. Deep spirituality refers to this experience of having intimacy with God and is the starting point for all of us. It is grounded in worship, prayer, study and reading the Bible. IT is in discerning the gifts that God has given you for the common good. And there are a variety of these gifts according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians. But all are activated by one and the same Spirit.

Deep spirituality is when finding the joy that God loves us so much that we are held by God. Having deep spirituality is the cornerstone of who we are as individuals. Just how deep is your love for God? And how might you grow in this relationship? What tools do you have/ need to deepen your spirituality? That is how deep is your spirituality and how you relate to God.

“There were 12 disciples Jesus called to help him: Simon Peter, Andrew, James his brother John; Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon, Judas and Bartholomew. “ These are the people Jesus called to follow him throughout his ministry. Jesus and these people were invited to a wedding. Jesus' mother Mary was also invited and when the wine gave out she went to Jesus and told him to do something. Without wine the wedding would stop and people would leave. But Jesus tells her, it is not yet my time. The servants were told by Mary to listen to Jesus. Realizing that he could do something, he told the servants to fill the large jars with water. They were then to take some to the chief steward of the banquet. When he tasted it he didn't know where it came from and told the bridegroom about how good the wine was and how most people only serve the good wine first. The servants and the disciples knew what had happened with the water. And at the end of this passage in John 2 it simply states, “and his disciples believed in him.”

Why are Jesus closest 12 friends called disciples? The word comes from the Latin word *discipulus* which means pupil. This is who these men were- pupils who followed Jesus and were learning about Jesus. And when Jesus changed the water to wine they believed in him. They understood who he was as the Son of God because no one else could do the things He did. They were disciples of Jesus and so are we if we believe in him. Discipleship is where our understanding of God connects with our lives- that is everyday living. In these last weeks of this

Season after Pentecost our focus has been on how we put our faith into action. It is how we respond to Jesus calling us to give thanks, it is in how we respond to food security and distribution, it is in how we share in ministry as individuals and together within the church, it is also growing in faith so that we might be an example to others and help others come to know Christ. And as we draw closer to Reign of Christ Sunday, being Jesus' disciple calls us to share and show that Jesus is Shepherd, King and Saviour. To be a disciple of Jesus, takes discipline which is what gives life to learning.

When Jesus turned the water into wine it is a turning point in his life. So what occurred for you to become Christ's disciple that is a person who boldly follows Christ and takes up the call to serve? What does being Jesus' disciple mean and how bold are you in fulfilling your calling?

Discipleship is seeing how our lives are a sacred calling and out of faith we connect our gifts with the needs of the world. It is how our lives become avenues of God's love and presence in the world. We should not be hesitant in understanding or embracing this, but rather bold in claiming every moment of every day and every activity as an expression of how God is caring for the world through us. It is belonging, changing and finding your purpose and calling. It is becoming like Christ because you are His!

Two wonderful church words are often paired together: righteousness and justice. We define righteousness as being in right relationship with God and the experience of deep spirituality and bold discipleship. It is the bond between God and us that shapes our lives.

Justice is the bond between God and God's people that shapes the world. It is what moves faith from 'me' to all of us as a church in the world. Justice shapes our world and brings our different gifts together as one. Justice is living as the body of Christ with the hope that one day we will see the glorious new creation as prophesied by Isaiah in ch.65.

But what is daring Justice? It is putting the gospel of Christ in the light of the world—it is raising the needs of the people to right living. The United Church has a history of justice—sponsoring refugees, supporting the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, admitting to the role the church paid in residential schools and then committing to reconciliation. Justice is when people

living in the margins of society are given a voice and space to speak. As a church we are known to bring justice to the world, our country and locally to the people who are in need. We might call it outreach or making a difference but essentially it is when our response is collective and transformative.

We respond however not out of fear, but to the world in faith. Many churches are fearful of what is to come and the community they love is uncertain. Often these churches take the least risk- of upsetting someone, or sustainability for themselves. But when we are called to do justice, we are one in faith and respond in faith. It is our hope that one day the new creation will come into being. This is shared by the prophet Isaiah. It is a glimpse of God's vision for a world transformed. A world of the peaceable kingdom first created by God. So in order for this to occur, we need to trust God, seek and follow him. And we need to leave our fears behind so that we might be in the world as people committed to Christ Jesus and have deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice.

Let us pray

God we pray that the words of this vision statement become more than words. Help us to take them to heart so that we will be deep bold and daring as we continue to serve Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord. Help us we pray to discern our spirituality, what it means to have discipline and to do justice in challenging and changing times. We ask O God as we offer our hearts to you in praise and prayer. SILENCE> Amen.