

Season of Epiphany
January 22, 2012

Minister's Message

Rev. Teresa's Schedule this past week...

- prepared the Annual Reports for distribution today and next Sunday.
- met with the Worship and Nurture committee to plan upcoming worship and social events of the congregation. We are beginning a new strategy for our Sunday School, and looking at providing a more comprehensive pastoral care program to our church family and friends.
- met with a prospective bride and groom on Wednesday evening as they plan a Spring wedding.
- served coffee at the very successful Fish Fry on Friday night. Despite the cold weather causing some problems with the propane heating units for the fryers, the largest crowd we have ever had enjoyed hot fish and chips.

Next Week

Annual Meeting
following worship

Moving Forward Based on Mark 1:14-20

"Hey you, ya, you, the one over there. I've just had a great idea. I decided to buy this here gently used RV, and you and me, why we're going get into that buggy and start driving all around Canada, telling everyone we meet about Jesus! Now what do you think about that? Won't that be fun? We'll see some sights, meet some interesting people, save some souls for Jesus. We'll call it a Christian fishing expedition, just like Jesus himself did way back when. (pause) Well, no, I don't have any money for gas, but not to worry. I'm sure something can be figured out. And we don't need no hotel? We can just sleep in the RV and crash at WalMart parking lots like everyone else. Food? Well, no, I don't have any money for restaurants either. But I'm sure you're a whiz with a little camp stove and some Kraft Dinner. No, we don't have a lot of room for your stuff. Just wear the clothes you've got and we'll find some donations along the way. The Salvation Army is always generous about these things. Your job? Ah, you've got a new job now: saving souls for Jesus. What could be more important than that? Come on, we got to go. Call your wife? Na, no time for that. We'll find a pay phone along the way somewhere, and you can call here from there and let her know what's up. I just know she's going to be tickled pink when she hears of our great idea. Come on, now, get into the RV. Time's a wasting!"

Now, I must say from the start that we've probably all heard a wild story something like this over our lifetime, and just shook our head at how preposterous it sounded. But after reading this scripture over a few times this week, I'm wondering if maybe the ones we thought were half crazy had it right all along! I am reminded about the passage from Luke 9 where everyone has a different excuse about why they can't go right there and then to help spread the message of Christ. Because I know for a fact that if the character of our story showed up at my doorstep with his Holy Proposition, the first thing going through my mind would be: Who is going to take care of the kids and pick them up from school? What will I tell my husband? What will they eat for supper tonight? Is there enough money in the bank? How will the bills get paid? What will the neighbours think? And seriously now, let's think about it. What would you think if you came to worship next Sunday morning only to discover Helen Slack as your Clerk of Session in the pulpit explaining that your Minister has left the area on a Mission Trip to somewhere in a beat up RV with someone she hardly knows, spreading the word of Jesus Christ in WalMart parking lots all over Canada? Seriously now, would you be jumping up and down in your pew saying "Praise Jesus," or would you be sitting there in shock thinking that finally I had lost the last ounce of common sense I thought I still had!



The problem is that's what the scripture tells us. So that is what we have to wrestle with. Some versions of this story indicate that Simon and Andrew, James and John had seen and heard Jesus before. Jesus had been a familiar face in the temple, reading scriptures and reflecting. And he had been doing a lot of talking around town and in the countryside. His name was a familiar one. And his message, his different message of hope, was also known. But in my mind, there is still a leap of faith from listening to a good speaker and packing your bags and hitting the road with him, now knowing when you would return, how you would manage along the way, how your family would manage while you were gone, and so on. But we should be careful not to push this idea too far, though. There might have been a lot more talking and planning and fundraising that went along behind the scene that was never written into the story. We simply don't know.

But whatever the details, something Jesus said or did compelled these men to leave everything that was familiar to them and become his first disciples. Jesus knew by this time, that he was going to need help. But these men knew that they needed Jesus. So what was it about Christ that so filled these men, to drop everything and follow him. What did they see in Jesus? Hope? Truth? Sincerity? Authenticity? Are any of these things enough for you to drop everything and take a new direction in your life? (something to think about later on this afternoon).

A story is told of a man whose plane crashed in the jungle. After wandering for some time, he came upon a clearing and a hut. A native man appeared, and the pilot asked if he could get him out of the jungle, to which the native man responded confidently, "Yes." They started the journey, with the native man in the lead slashing the brush in front of them. This went on for hours, and finally the exhausted pilot cried out, "You said you knew the path out of here. Where is it?" To which the guide slowly turned, and with piercing eyes replied, "I am the path."

~from *Good News*, January, February 2012, p. 39

You see, the about-to-be disciples saw all those good things about Jesus: truth, honesty, sincerity, authenticity. But there was something more. Jesus saw their in their soul first. Jesus had an ability to look at someone and tear away the layers of guilt and shame and frustration and fear and look only at the soul. And my friends if you have ever had the experience to spend time in the presence of someone who looks at you first, by looking at your soul, it is indeed a most Holy moment, and yes, my friends, you would drop everything and follow them if asked. Let us consider the Holy moment when you made your wedding vows. Peel away the layers of time and troubles and temptations and triumphs of your marriage and consider that holy moment when you shared your vows with the other. Were you not in fact, saying to each other: "Follow me, and I will Follow you" Did you not change direction and begin a new life with that person, from that day forward? Then my friends, you now understand how the disciples felt that day along the shore of Galilee.

Jesus looked first, at the soul of the person, nurtured it, and put it back out there into the world to be shared. He peeled away the layers of class, rank, possessions; of prestige and power, and looked simply at the soul of the other. If there was a need, he filled it. If there was a need for healing, he healed. If there was a need for listening, he listened. If there was a need for reprimand, he chastised. This is what made Jesus' message different from all the rest. And it is still what makes the Christian message unique today.

So when we are approached by an individual or a situation, what is our first response? Do we have a look at the person and his or her clothes, or their rank in our society (and don't tell me that we don't rank people in our society, because we do) and decide whether or not we want to take things any further? Or do we find a good and reasonable excuse for why we shouldn't help the situation? Or do we look for the soul, and respond accordingly?

May you be brave enough to take the blinders off and see the soul of the world around us. May you have the courage to drop your nets and follow Him as he guides you to fill a need. And may you never be approached by a crazy man in an old RV with a Bible in his hand. Amen.