

Sunday 22nd Jan. Matthew 4:12-23 and 1 Cor. 1:10-18
The year for Adventure !

Intro...

Some familiar words in our readings today

Words in Matthew are quoting words from the prophet Isaiah - our first reading today

Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

These words are very familiar to many of us.

Often read at Christmas, in fact we had them this year at our Midnight Service

It is good to hear the familiar sometimes isn't it? With so much change and and uncertainty in our world there is comfort & reassurance in hearing and seeing and experiencing the familiar. And that can be good for us **SOMETIMES**.

These are good words **aren't** they? The people who had walked or sat in darkness saw a great light... they had what we might call a 'light bulb moment' Truths that they were unaware of, that had been hidden from them, came in to sight. On them the light shined, the light dawned.

These words that are familiar to us, that may even be comforting to us, are telling an amazing truth.

People who did not know about God, who were in darkness, the Gentiles, became included in the revelation and truths about God and HIS Kingdom.

Let's just backtrack a moment to the start of the Gospel reading

Jesus moves to **Capernaum...**

Jesus left his hometown of Nazareth and '*made* his home in Capernaum.'

Capernaum - a town of about 1000 people, mostly dependent on farming or fishing for their livelihood.

Capernaum - a town conquered by Rome, ruled by Herod Antipas

Does anyone know anything about Herod Antipas?

He was a brutal and intolerant ruler, especially when he felt his authority was being threatened

He had John the baptist arrested and then beheaded

Just before **Jesus'** crucifixion Pilate had him sent to **Herod...** remember? and Herod rejected Jesus face to face. That was Herod Antipas

So Jesus moved to Capernaum, seeking out those in need, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, He moved there, just after his cousin John had been arrested by this brutal ruler, within the context of danger and darkness and death.

Why? to proclaim light and life !

This was far from comfortable, familiar territory for Jesus. More like a dangerous move I would say.

But Jesus went there to bring light to those in darkness

He proclaimed that 'the Kingdom of God has come *near*'

He went about inviting sinners into

 proclaiming the demands of

 bringing people into **God's Kingdom**

If anything were likely to ruffle Herod's feathers this was it
As the end of the Gospel reading says, Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching, proclaiming a
different Kingdom, a different rule, a Kingdom of Good News
A Kingdom of light and Life. A Kingdom that would rule over that of evil and death.
And as if to prove that, he cured every disease and every sickness among the people.
Familiarity and comfort? Or change and adventure?

But Jesus **didn't** do this alone!

Right at the start of Jesus' public ministry he called some people to join him in the adventure.
I love these next few verses. BUT am greatly challenged by them too.
Again they are probably familiar to us.
Jesus, walking along by the sea sees Simon Peter and Andrew and asks them to follow Him.
These ordinary men, going about their daily work of fishing, out on the familiar lake, were asked to
follow Jesus and change from fishing for food to fishing for men
And then Jesus saw James & John, busy mending the tools of their trade - their fishing nets. Jesus
called them and they too left their boat AND their father and followed Jesus.

These 4 men left the security of their work and their family to go on an adventure with Jesus.
An adventure that they probably had no idea about when they started out.
They became followers, learners, apprentices of Jesus
And went on an adventure that would test them, and push them, and challenge them.
But one that would ultimately bring light and life to thousands of others.

What a call! What a mission! What a new way of life!
To learn from Jesus first hand. To be a part of God's sovereign rule.
What an adventure!

I wonder what CALL God has for us? What MISSION he has for us? What NEW WAY OF LIFE he
has for us?
I think that God sometimes wants to take us out of our comfort zones, in to new things and to go
on an adventure with Him. Both individually and together as His body in this place.
God is our comfort, our shelter. Yes! But that is different from being comfortable which can so
easily lead us to becoming too complacent.

Jesus used words and action.
He used words as he taught and proclaimed and he took action as he visited and he healed.
And he taught and showed these 4 men, and then others, the good news of the Kingdom
And then they too share the good news of the Kingdom with others in word and action.
What was their qualification for such an incredible adventure??
The only qualification they needed was the willingness to lay down everything and become followers,
disciples of Jesus! REPEAT! The ONLY qualification they needed...!

Are you... Am I... Are we together... ready for such an adventure?
An adventure that would mean that others would get to know about the love of God. That others
would walk out of darkness and into God's great light?

Jesus and his followers, his disciples, WENT OUT to the people

They met the needs of the people, teaching them in simple words, through stories they could relate to but sometimes had to think about.

They met their needs through action too.

And the numbers who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Light of the World increased.

And the church was born.

Are we ready for the adventure?

Because as believers in Christ, as followers of Jesus, we too are called to share the good news of the Kingdom with those we meet, in both word and action.

I have asked David to just come and share briefly something that happened this last week when he and Linda were out for a walk.

Are we ready for the adventure?

Remember - the only qualification needed is that we are willing to lay everything down, in surrender to God and let Him lead us.

The problem is that many of us overcomplicate things.

We over estimate what God wants from us

And under estimate our ability.

It is not hard. All David and Linda did was lay down their pride - nothing difficult there !! :-)

And share with that man, simple words about the love Jesus has for him

It is not hard but we do need a determination to carry the message of hope and love and good news with us, and be ready to share it in simple words and action in our daily lives.

It is not difficult but it is challenging and may be frightening!

But how exciting it would be if we all determine to lay down everything to God today and agree to go on an adventure with Him in 2017 and see where He takes us.

So I leave you with these words from Joshua as I challenge us all to join Jesus on His adventure this year.

Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.