

Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

## **Sermon January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**

### *Embracing Jesus' World*

When Jesus comes to Andrew, Simon, James, and John, he invites them to leave their world behind, and embrace this new world Jesus will show them through his teaching, preaching, and healing. The kingdom of heaven. A kingdom shaped and defined by God's forgiving grace, healing love, and radical hospitality. Jesus will invite these four to embrace this kingdom life, forgiving, healing, and being hospitable to others.

At first, Andrew, Simon, James, and John jump at this opportunity to follow Jesus. They immediately leave their world behind. But as we dive further in the stories of the gospels, we see that it is one thing to put down their nets and follow Jesus in the moment. It is another to stay the course. To permanently leave their nets behind. To not look back at the world they have left behind. To avoid having this world creep back into their lives, influencing their thoughts, words, and behaviours.

Unfortunately, the disciples struggle to let go completely of the world they leave behind. For example, when Jesus lives out the radical hospitality of the world Jesus wants them to embrace, they often protest this act. Whether it is Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at the well or Jesus healing a Canaanite woman's daughter or Jesus welcoming the children who want to sit with Jesus. The disciples sometimes find themselves looking back at the world they left behind. The world where their judgments, assumptions, selfish ambitions, and biases shape their thoughts, words, and behaviours.

This struggle to leave the nets on the ground continues in the early church when Paul has to play referee to different sects of Christianity in Corinth. They are a divided church. Influenced by the world that they supposedly had left behind. The world where they are driven by their pride, their selfish ambitions. The world where instead of embracing the forgiveness in Jesus' world. They embrace violence, division, hatred, revenge.

Throughout the history of our church, we have allowed the world we are invited to leave behind to creep back in. To sometimes influence our words and our behaviours. We sometimes lose sight of living out the essentials of the kingdom of heaven, the world Jesus invites us to embrace. Forgiveness, healing, and hospitality. Instead, we find ourselves judging others harshly, hurting others, and creating barriers to keep marginalized people from feeling welcome.

This isn't our whole history, but unfortunately, it has been a part of our history. And when this world we are invited to leave behind creeps back in it can lead to division within the church

This week is the week of prayer for Christian Unity. A week where we try to refocus our attention back on Jesus' invitation to embrace the kingdom of heaven. God's forgiving grace, healing love, and radical hospitality. To once again put down our nets and follow Jesus.

Because this is a commitment, we have to make everyday. It doesn't just happen at the point where Jesus chooses us. It happens every time the world we left behind tries to creep back into our thoughts, words, and actions.

Every time this happens, we are invited to remember Jesus' invitation to embrace a world where our anger, our hatred, our need for revenge is replaced with God's forgiving grace. We are invited to remember Jesus' invitation to embrace a world where our violence, our tendencies to hurt one another are replaced with words and acts of healing. We are invited to remember Jesus' invitation to embrace a world where our judgements, assumptions, and biases are replaced with God's radical hospitality.

When we embrace the world Jesus invites us to live out then we bear witness to God's love at work in our world through us, the church. We see people being transformed by God's grace to live without shame. To live free to be everything God created them to be.

We see people being healed from their pain, their wounds, their sufferings. We see people who have been stung by rejection feeling welcomed and appreciated for who they are. People who now feel safe and empowered to show this same hospitality to others. We see a church that stands in unity with one another working together to reveal God's forgiving grace, healing love, and radical hospitality to a world in need.

When we embrace this world Jesus invites us to live out, we see that we too are recipients of God's forgiving grace when that world we try so hard to leave behind sometimes creeps back in. We see that we too are recipients of God's healing love when we bear the wounds of living in a world, we try so hard to leave behind. We see that we too are recipients of God's radical hospitality. Welcomed for who we are with all of our shortcomings.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for choosing us to embrace your kingdom come. When the world we try to leave behind creeps back into our thoughts, words, and behaviours, turn our hearts to repent. Guide us back to your world. Help us live out your forgiving grace, your healing love, your radical hospitality, so others may know your love, may see your beautiful vision for our lives, and for our world. **Amen.**