

Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 112:1-10
1 Corinthians 2:1-16
Matthew 5:13-20

Sermon February 5th, 2023

God's Light Shine's Brightly When We Work Together

A couple of weeks ago churches around the world came together in their respective communities to commemorate the week of prayer for Christian Unity. A week where we create opportunities to worship together. Pray together for unity in our church. In previous years we met up with St. Paul's Anglican church to worship together during this week.

The week of prayer for Christian Unity is a week where we create opportunities to learn about the diversity that exists within each Christian denomination. Sometimes there are bible studies or lectures people can attend.

The week of prayer for Christian Unity is a week where we create opportunities to celebrate what we share in common. This has been done through potlucks and other social events.

The week of prayer for Christian Unity is a week where we strive to work together with other churches to love our neighbours. Sometimes we will get together to build a home or help out at a soup kitchen or put on a clothing giveaway.

From last Wednesday, February 1st to this Tuesday February 7th people of different faith traditions from around the world are coming together in their respective communities to commemorate Interfaith Harmony Week. A week where we create opportunities to learn about the diversity that exists within each one of us and our faith tradition. We, the Calgary Interfaith Council, host panel discussions, potlucks, socials, open houses.

Interfaith Harmony week is a week where we celebrate what we share in common. We, the Calgary Interfaith Council, have an opening ceremony where we celebrate a common theme together. Where we share in a common goal to promote harmony wherever we go.

Interfaith harmony week is a week where we create opportunities to work together to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Following the golden rule that stretches across faith traditions. We, the Calgary Interfaith Council, have a service project we participate in most years. This year representatives from a variety of faith traditions will volunteer to help with a habitat build on Tuesday.

As Paul says to the church in Corinth, when our focus is driven by God's wisdom, we are more likely to live out the hospitality and inclusivity that this wisdom calls us to live out. We look to build partnerships and friendships with people from other denominations, other faith traditions. Working towards a common goal to create a more harmonious and peaceful world to live in. Embracing what we share in common while respecting, appreciating, and even learning from the diversity that exists between us.

When our focus is driven by human wisdom, we are more likely to see the diversity between us as a barrier. We are more likely to become more inward in our thinking. Instead of practicing hospitality, we avoid relationships with people from other Christian denominations or faith traditions. We start to think our way is the only way, and that anyone who thinks differently doesn't belong. We start competing with other denominations and faith traditions. We might even get into conflicts over the diversity that exists between us here at All Saints.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus says we are the light of the world. We, meaning, our faith community, is a reflection of God's light shining in the world showing people where God's healing and redemption are at work. Living out God's love to our neighbours. Being the inclusive and hospitable presence God calls us to be.

The cool thing about light is when it combines with other light the light shines brighter.

When we get together with our ecumenical and interfaith partners, we reflect God's light in a much bigger and brighter way. We are able to do more together than as individual communities to love our neighbours as ourselves. Whether it is building a house together for someone in need of shelter or serving a meal to those who need food. Whether it is creating bridges of harmony and peace in our community through dialogue over contentious issues or helping a refugee family settle. When we come together, we have many more resources to be this loving inclusive hospitable presence to our neighbours.

When we come together, as Isaiah states, we loosen the chains of injustice. We set the oppressed free. We become part of God's great act of justice for our world. Not part of the oppression that comes with violence and division.

We are the light of the world. Let our light shine before others. Words many of us heard on the day of our baptism. We were washed in these waters with a promise that God welcomes us. God includes us. And God shapes us through these waters to live out this welcoming inclusive spirit towards others.

If you have not had a chance to attend an event this week wherever you are, I encourage you to google search Interfaith harmony week to see what opportunities are being offered for you to come together with people from a variety of faith traditions, and

love your neighbour. Learning to appreciate the diversity they bring to the dialogue table, as well as, celebrating, and being surprised at how much you share in common with your interfaith neighbours.

We are the light of the world. Let our light shine before others.

Let us pray, gracious God, we give thanks for the diversity that exists all around us. Help us learn to appreciate this diversity, and create opportunities to come together with people from other faiths and denominations to shine a very bright light in our community. **Amen.**

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