

Lightbulb Moments!

Isaiah 91-4; Psalm 27^{1,4-12}; 1 Corinthians 1¹⁰⁻¹⁸; Matthew 4¹²⁻²³

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.. [Matthew 4¹⁶]

Dr Martin Luther King Jr preached at St Paul's Cathedral, London, on the 6th December 1964 on his way to pick up his Nobel Peace Prize in Norway. He said:

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

When the lights come on, love naturally follows and that transforms both us and the world.

When Christians follow Jesus, as Simon and John did, and as James and John did, it is as if we pick up a torch and our job is to transform darkness and that we take seriously our duty to love hate out of existence.

- ✠ Matthew points out (as Matthew often does) how Jesus fulfils Old Testament prophecy. Where Jesus had set up home meant that **Zebulun and Naphtali** had realised their potential, but more important is the fulfilment that meant **the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light**. This was the most significant change in gear in our shared human history.

You know from previous sermons that when Jesus says, **repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near**, he uses the Greek work, *metanoia*, which means to change your mind. It is followed up immediately by an example of what that means in practice. When Jesus called the two sets of brothers to **follow me** they changed their minds about what mattered to them - they left their livelihood and became followers. This was a lightbulb moment for them.

- ✠ Perhaps this is why Paul says, **the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God**.

How many heard that the first disciples **immediately** left what they were doing and followed Jesus thought, where did they live; what did they live on; what about their families; why?

Faith isn't supposed to make sense - it wouldn't be faith if it did. Yet, when the lights come on it is the only option.

It's a bit like swimming in cold water - it doesn't seem at all attractive a proposition to those who are on the edge or who just dip a toe in the water, but to those who are totally submerged it makes perfect sense.

- ✠ When the lights come on we fully understand that the Christian Community (the things we call the Church) isn't about 'us' but about Christ.

Paul has to write - put right at the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians because it was the thing that needed addressing - that **all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions Among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and same purpose**. That was because **it has been reported to me...that there are quarrels among you**. If that becomes the case in any Christian community, **the cross of Christ** can be **emptied of its power**.

I am aware that this Christian Community isn't perfect: we have work to do - sometimes people need to talk to each other and not about one another - but this is, in my experience, the most loving and accepting Christian Community I have had the privilege to be part of or to serve. Yet, we need to develop more the sense that we are a lifeboat and not a cruise liner for the sake of **those who are perishing!** To take more seriously our task to pass on to those around us Jesus invitation, **follow me**.

Last Sunday, in the Church where I was organist in my teenage years, there was a service marking 50 years since 5 of the crew of 6 in the lifeboat, *The Duchess of Kent*, lost their lives - the third such disaster in a generation. Those events cast a long shadow over a small fishing town, yet there is still a lifeboat there, despite the risks. The passion that drives someone to put themselves at risk is motivated by love of others that is greater than our love for ourselves.

When the lights come on in the Church we are equally driven by the passion of Christ to love others.

Next Sunday, Bishop Anne will lead our Candlemass celebrations and rededicate this Church building and that will close the chapter where we have done what we have to so that we are not distracted by buildings. The challenge then is that we learn how to use this as a functioning lifeboat - to drive out darkness with light and hate by love and to call people to follow Christ!