

3rd Sunday ordinary time year A

I imagine we all have an aversion to darkness.

It emphasizes our fear of the unknown threats that may lurk there.

I remember when as a young boy awaking in the darkness of the night and imagining all sorts of worrying things, including the possibility of an unknown presence, and the relief that followed when the light was switched on to reveal all was well.

There are other times when we walk in darkness. The darkness of worries about our welfare and that of our loved ones worries about money matters, depression, illness and death.

There are times also when the darkness of doubt, insecurity and discontent overshadows and weakens our faith.

Today's readings remind us that during these dark times, whatever shadows fall across our path, Jesus is the one to bring light and hope into our lives, often in unexpected ways. In the 1st reading today the people of Israel were experiencing dark times, especially those living in Zebulum

& Naphtali who were under complete domination of the Assyrians, forced to intermarry with the danger of eventually converting to the Samaritan sect, that was despised by the Jews.

The whole of Israel was subjected to the darkness of oppression. Ruled by a foreign power, that worshiped false gods.

Isaiah gave them hope by prophesying a new King who would set them free and bring the light of hope to a people who walked in darkness.

Isaiah looked to a time when this person would be a great light that would lead them into abundant joy.

Some 700 years later Jesus appears on the scene- again in dark times as the country was under Roman domination and the people especially the priests, scribes, & Pharisees had drifted away from their covenants with God.

Lets look now at the gospel, In this ordinary time we have the gospels according to Matthew, not written by him personally but theologians tell us by his followers in Jerusalem.

However Matthews gospels reflect his personality. He was a tax collector, despised by the population because of this. Matthew had great inward strength, was a fiery preacher as reflected in this gospel.

Matthews gospel starts with the geniality of Jesus, follows him throughout His ministry, including his death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. His gospel is the first, and arguably the best, of the synoptic gospels.

So in Matthew today Jesus is identified as the prophesied one, who brings light to his people who had been sitting in darkness, and Matthew points out how the prophesy of Isaiah is being fulfilled.

Jesus was preaching to a group of people living in an area sometimes called the Galilee of the gentiles the population comprised a large group of Hellenistic pagans as well as Jews. They were generally marginalized, mainly poor peasants. Jesus came to bring them the light of faith, urging them to repent.

He then moved on and came across Peter, James, & John fishing on Lake Galilee, he called them and they immediately left their boats and followed him.

Jesus called what appears to be less than ideal candidates for discipleship, simple working class men, not trained in Jewish law. People with no great background, other than their knowledge of fishing. In terms of social standing fishermen were basically at the bottom of the ladder.

Jesus knew that what he needed were ordinary folk who would give of themselves, without reservation, and be open to his teaching.

He did not require them to undertake any formal studies, instead he showed them a way of life to follow, offering them the opportunity to observe him closely on a daily basis, in this way he molded them into fishers of men who would be able to carry on his work after his death.

What Jesus asks of us today is that, just as the Apostles did we do not hesitate to follow his call, to discipleship.

As we are captured by God's love, we are urged by him to repent, to die to self and obey him.

God is not only right for us but following Him is a message we need to share with others, by taking the light of Christ to all around us.

The challenge for us is that no matter what our lifestyle or social situation, as disciples of Jesus we are called at various times to leave something behind so that we can follow Him. We cannot stay put in an immature understanding of Jesus. Each of us has to name for ourselves, in our own time and place, how we radically turn our hearts to the following of Jesus.