



Dear brothers and sisters!

To everything there is a season, yet there are changeless things in nature, and in Scripture and in our own hearts. This photo captures the beauty of the moon and the sun together, as the sun again rises following weeks of darkness in the

far north. “ The people who walked in darkness now see a new light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them the new light shines”. (Isaiah 1: 2 adpt)
Hope you enjoy the photo!

-Judie+

The Third After Epiphany:

The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel (Mark 1:15)

Readings: Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalm 62: 6-14

1 Corinthians 7: 29-31

The Collect:

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

The Holy Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20

Sermon: Last Sunday, we were thrilled and blessed to hear Jesus saying “Come and See”. Today, we hear Jesus saying “Follow Me”, and that **commandment**, for that is what it is, peels out hope and joy for anyone who has had the privilege to Come and See. You **have** to see before you can follow. And seeing is always a gift of grace.

I was reminded of an old TV commercial this week that is relevant, I think, to our Gospel reading. A man bemoaning his failures to quit smoking and his desire to try again, and looking directly into the eyes of a supposed doctor he asks “Do you have advice, and tips I can follow”. The camera turns so we can see the “doc”, and what we actually see is the fuzzy headed family pooch sitting in a chair. The dog looks mildly puzzled then leaps down and walks away. The moral of the commercial being: Make sure you are talking to the right person”. Likewise, we human beings have to make very sure that we are following the right person. Andrew and Simon Peter figured out quickly that Jesus was the right person for them to follow.

How did they know? Because they had already spent an afternoon and evening in Jesus company. When Andrew said “Where are you staying” and Jesus said “Come and See” a relationship was formed. Jesus was no longer just someone John the Baptist had said was the Lamb of God...Jesus was someone they knew, they trusted, someone who had the authority to even rename Simon as Peter.

Although they now clearly saw, they were not yet called to follow. Andrew and Peter went back to their home, their boats and their trade of fishing. Meanwhile, Jesus moved on into the wilderness for about six weeks. When His temptation was finished, and His mission was firm in His mind, Jesus came out of the desert only to learn that John had been arrested and was in prison. Then Jesus left behind His family and His boyhood home and moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, the region of the Gentiles beyond the Jordan. Jesus did not move out of fear, but rather to fulfil the prophecy of the Isaiah. Once settled, He was ready to begin His work. To help Him, He went to find Andrew and Peter, and two other brothers named James and John. He found them at the lake doing what they did best...fishing...and said "Come follow Me" And they did. Just like that. Andrew and Peter had already "come and seen"...perhaps they'd shared what they'd learned with their neighbours James and John, but at any rate, they all had no hesitation to "Follow". Seeing and following are, I believe, woven together quite intricately not only back there and then, but also here and now.

In our baptism, our families or sponsors bring us to the font, where the grace of God is poured upon us as water and we begin our lives as members of the family of God in the church. We spend some years "Coming and Seeing". Then, for Anglicans, we get to hear a very strong "Follow Me!" as we choose whether or not to be Confirmed. Confirmation is our response of "Yes, I will follow Jesus". We spend the rest of our lives learning how to live in this world as Jesus lived; how to love as Jesus loved; and to grow day by day and inch by inch to have the Mind of Christ. We also hear another commandment: Go and Tell...make disciples...baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Such is the Christian Life. It begins with the invitation: Come and See . It grows when Jesus says: Follow Me. It matures when Jesus says "Go and Tell" And its greatest joy is when Jesus says "Well done."

The result of following Jesus is that He makes us fishers of men. Now that has nothing to do with putting out bait and catching people unawares, or driving people with threats and fear into nets we set out for them. We will not be removing real scales from critters with fins...we will be used to help remove spiritual scales from people with longing hearts and blind eyes. We will be bringing about what Isaiah prophesied saying **“they will rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest.... ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken.....**” Fishing for men means breaking yokes, removing burdens, taking harsh rods off people’s shoulders, stopping oppression, and bringing great joy. Now who does not want to do those things. And who would not want to have that done for them. There could be no higher calling. And that calling is for each and every one of us.

So how are we doing with that? Personally.....ask yourself whether you can, you could, or you actually do ever speak the words of your faith out loud to people who you sense need to hear them. Bringing cookies and soup or offering a beer and conversation are all lovely and **important** ministries, but in and of themselves, they do not point to Jesus. Even kind atheists do those types of things! At some point, when it feels right, we need to be able to say “this is what Jesus has done for me. Come along with me and see!” If words come difficult to you, try this. Get a little index card and write three sentences on it expressing your relationship with Jesus and how that has changed your life. Make it authentic. Make it sound like you. Comfortable. Then memorize it and pray that the Holy Spirit will let you know when to speak it.

As a congregation we are also faced with decisions about how we will continue to follow Jesus. Where is Jesus taking us? What’s going to happen to our Church? I want to share something Henry Ford said after unveiling one of his very early motor cars. “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have

said a **faster horse**". If I asked you today what you really want **as the people** of God in Lake of Bays or at St. Thomas , I think you would tell me you want **MORE people of God** in the very same buildings and pews. We know things need to change, so we try to "tweak" what we are already doing. We try new things, lament that we don't do old things, change the music, get a new priest, dream up new activities but we really **can't imagine or even desire** anything that is truly **beyond what is familiar already**. I think we are quite set on creating a faster **horse**, when what God may have in mind for us is an entirely new vehicle. Jesus continues to say "Follow Me!" It would be tragic if we find ourselves resolutely clinging to our pews if...if...IF... Jesus is asking us to follow Him, not only **in** the building, but also right out of the building.

And so we need vision, holiness in imagination, hard work, and deep trust that when we perceive something as a problem, it may actually be a gift. A gift from God challenging us to make new vehicles of ministry, moving us onward and outward. We have come, we have seen, and we have followed...perhaps there will be new destinations for our "followings".

I leave it to your prayers.

Here's a picture of me doing two baptisms "out of the building" at beautiful Camp Gitchigomee in Thunder Bay. What a delight that was. After the two children were baptized, all the congregation gathered at the dock on the shoreline, and I celebrated Eucharist while still immersed in the water myself. The locals now refer to the lake as "Sacred Lake", as when we consecrated the waters for baptism, they become convinced that they would ever remain so! Just one example of following Jesus wherever He leads. Some of you will recognize my "assistant" Rose Jardine holding the Bible for me....she has often attended at St. Thomas when visiting with me, and enjoys the fellowship the congregation

tremendously.

Amen.



Prayers:

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others; open my ears that I may hear their cries; open my heart so that they need not be without succor.

Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong.

Nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich.

Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places.

And so open my eyes, and my ears, that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for Thee.

the Heart"

This is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all enmity and prejudice and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (BCP Pg 40)

Blessing: May the Spirit fill you to overflowing so that your light will shine before people, and they will see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven, and the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you and lead you into joyful paths of righteousness. Amen.