

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

January 22, 2023



DAWN

Seeing the hope that is present

by Drew Downs

Matthew quotes Isaiah in this week's gospel to set the stage for how we are to see Jesus. That he is the light of dawn when we are in the shadow of death.

This is a great image. It is also really big picture. And I think most of us struggle with making this feel real.

We know Jesus is to be our savior. But when our burden is rent or utilities, we're not sure

what this saving is supposed to look like (other than a rent check).

I suspect we're thinking it is a choice between a literal and metaphorical view of our faith. But life is never so easily split.

We are the hands and feet of Christ, literally offering hope to each other *and* faith in Christ can move mountains. In every way, hope, then, is our greatest asset.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Leading + Following

Last week I was reminded of a short video about leadership. The visual is of a crowd on the lawn at a concert. It is clearly an outdoor amphitheater. The footage is shaky, cellphone stock. And what we see is just one guy in the crowd dancing.

Derek Sivers talks over the video, telling us that this is a visual story of leadership. That here is a guy dancing when nobody else is.

But this one dancing guy isn't the most profound example of leadership. Someone else stands up and joins him. Sivers points out that it is the second person who gives others permission to do the same. Soon a third joins, then a couple more. By the end of the three minute video, a huge crowd has formed to participate in this incredible moment that none of them want to miss.

Most of us get tired of dancing alone. We also get really used to racing to join a party that's already gotten going.

As people of faith, we rarely have to be the *only* one doing something. There's usually at least a few of us. But we're often invited to take the leap of doing something that seems crazy. Or we're joining with someone doing something new. Helping each other. Having fun. Being there.

And that's how real movements actually start.

With love,
Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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FOR SUNDAY

The Third Sunday After the Epiphany

January 22, 2023

Collect

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Matthew 4:12-23

"Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him."

Reflection

This week, our gospel is a call story. In this particular case, the calling of Jesus's first four disciples.

The astute reader will notice that last week, the first two disciples were followers of John the Baptist. Matthew offers a different image. Here, they are fishermen.

It is notable that these four come as a pair of pairs. Two sets of brothers. In a sense, their kinship as siblings is as essential as the fact that there are two of them. And two pairs.

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Eventually, Jesus will send them out. In pairs, of course. Because the ministry is communal and from camaraderie. It isn't solitary. Or at least, it isn't supposed to be. We're always supposed to have partners.

They worked together. Jesus will have them continue to work together. Just for a different purpose.

This, however, is different from *family*. Families can have other priorities and obligations.

Jesus doesn't call the Zebedee family. He calls these two brothers. Sons whose notoriety comes from their father. In other words, he calls them *from* their family, their father, to be of service to the Kin-dom without him.

This reminds us of the teaching Jesus will offer later: that following Jesus will divide families. An uncomfortable and difficult idea. And one the church has so frequently chosen to preach *the opposite*.

Across the spectrum of church teaching, the priority has almost always been to *support* families; demand families, even. Teachings which have reinforced setting up a nuclear family to produce children, raising them in the church, and bemoaning any separation between family members as sin.

It makes sense theologically, but I'm wary of our motivations. Families often choose preservation over right, stability over justice, and obedience over joy.

When Jesus calls James and John, he calls them out of a family to be disciples. To be more than sons of their father: the liberators of other sons and daughters. And they will share in something bigger than their family: God's Kin-dom.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
