

One main theme at this time in the Christian year is Jesus calling his disciples, with his well-known call to those *fishermen*: “I will make you fishers of men!” A clever turn of phrase by Jesus. Masculine bias aside, it’s a memorable saying. Modern translations say something like “To you fishers of fish... I’ll teach you how to fish for people!

All the hymns and songs about Jesus call have some theme of sacrifice... there is a *cost* to following Jesus. The opening hymn, that I know well from my youth, speaks of the tumult... the tumultuous seas of this life... still so true! And it speaks of Andrew and Peter leaving their fishing job, and leaving their home and family to follow Jesus, to love him more than gold and pleasures. The second hymn also spoke of the *cost* of being a disciple.... that John, as an older man, died “homeless,” fleeing or exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9)...and that Peter was eventually crucified, upside down by the Roman Empire. and another famous disciple, Stephen, was stoned to death, for being steadfast in his proclamations about Jesus (Acts 7). Many 20th century disciples of Jesus also have sacrificed their lives for the way of Christ; one of the most famous being Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who as we know preached against the atrocities of Adolf Hitler. Though I will not elaborate on the *many current day examples*, Jesus spoke clearly against rule by force, against living “by the sword,” against military domination and brutality.

So what was Jesus FOR? What was the “Light” that came into the world in Jesus? LIGHT is a major theme of the entire Bible... and indeed the words from prophet Isaiah principally refer to the hoped for light of a new king, a descendant of King David, who would save them, even militarily, from all their enemies. But secondarily, yet more importantly, Isaiah then envisions a king who would be a “wonderful Counselor, everlasting Father, a Prince of Peace.” This would be a new kind of king, “King of kings and Lord of lords”, as Handel’s Messiah interprets it. When Isaiah speaks of such a transcendent king, a glorious king, and says “Unto us a child is born”), followers of

Jesus naturally think of Jesus as the “newborn king,” a new kind of king, the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd, that is all about Goodness and Grace, Light and Love, who called US to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth! The transcendent Christ is found in US. We are to Shine his “Light,” shining forth all good things like truth, peacemaking, forgiving, and compassionate love...the judgement of God, tempered always by the mercy of God.

I received a Christmas gift from the Ken Medema, that glows in the dark, with the words: “You are here to be light; Bring out the God Colors in the world.” That is our calling, our challenge. Given our differing gifts, What are the God Colors we can contribute to the world? For musicians, it is obvious... music with beautiful melody harmony or rhythm (You are here to make music, so bring out the God sounds in the world!) For writers, bring out the God words, noble words that give courage, phrases or slogans that give comfort, meaning, purpose. For people with warm loving hearts, (hopefully all of us!), bring out the God smiles, the friendly smiles, the gracious smiles in the world. (We all have a chance to do that at potlucks, like soon after worship... a chance for community-building and support.

There is a common story about people caught in the grip of worry, depression, and despair, who find worship too light, too positive, and unreal. But then they say: we’re unable to sing, but good to hear others singing for us. When our eyes are too cloudy to see it, others point to the goodness of God. When we’re too weary to carry a load, others may even carry us! When we’re unable to smile or extend the hand of peace, others *greet us* with friendship and peace.

With so much darkness all around, we hold fast to the Presence of God... as Light, as Truth, as Grace, as Courage, all the things that are Good. There is Beauty and Love and Light all around. Our calling is to see it, and then transmit and magnify it. We are called to be Light, to bring out the God-colors of the world! Amen.