

Isaiah 9:1-4

Matthew 4:12-23

1 John 3:1-2

“When you call us, may we follow.
When you send us, may we go.” AMEN!

“Hey, you there, follow me!”

If you’re like me,
then you’re going to need a little more than that
to leave your job like those fishermen.

They were doing what they were raised to do,
like in Bruce Springsteen’s great song called
“The River.”

“I come from down in the valley
where mister when you’re young.

They bring you up to do
like your daddy done.”

The expectation, down in the valley,
is that you do things certain ways,
stay in your station.

The expectation for those fishermen was the same,
but then there’s a Spirit thing that happens.

A “follow me” moment that
draws us to question

such expectations put on us by others.

It's a moment that can lead one
to worry about telling people we love
that news we know they don't want to hear,
but we know can't be denied.

I think if we were to plead
that concern of worry and hesitation to Jesus,
he'd say to us,

“Well, that’s discipleship.” (Pause)

Discipleship is that fancy church word
that means something very basic.

A disciple is one who is being a learner.

A person who sticks close to the teacher
to pick up a new way of life,
a life that's often not accepted
by mainstream culture.

Discipleship is a long and slow process
that's NOT only “me and Jesus,”
usually in that order, by the way! :-)

It is personal, AND
it's also a deeper connection that

happens in developing relationships
and making connections to see
the Jesus in me (and you) and
seeing the Jesus in the other.

It's like seeing the light at dawn and
feeling the glow of that light
warming the skin.

It's feeling that, after having to sit
in darkness and despair.

Queer and allies have seen God's light.

The light and warmth as a gentle Messiah
offering sweet relief to hurting people. (Pause)

This moment in history feels unique
as enemies draw near
seeking to separate and destroy.

Thoughtful ones are left quietly
longing for kindness, mercy, and
basic human dignity.

As Christians we cry out, "How long, O Lord?"

As it feels like the hurting and outcast

wait for rescue that doesn't come fast enough.

Well, beloved, I have good news and bad news.

First the bad news,
the savior is not a warring king.

Jesus will not come with guns and missiles.

That's a cycling lie that says we
have peace conquering people into submission.

Our truth is the faith that one day
God will restore and make things new,
but until then it's our job as
disciples of Jesus to embrace this truth.

To look at the past with honesty;
look carefully at it, and have a
new mind in going forward
so as to not make the same mistakes.

This brings us to the good news.

The savior is not a warring king, but
the savior's work for truth within our community
is active and alert.

This savior's work calls us to be better together,

to love because God calls us to love others, and
Jesus teaches us to love in bold ways,
sometimes even dangerous ways. (Pause)

You see, the cycle of history in which
we live in is very similar to the cycle of history
of other generations.

Racism is not new, quietism is not new,
conflict is not new, people's usage of weapons
to gain power is not new.

Jesus' first public words in Matthew's gospel were
“Repent, for the kingdom of God has drawn near.”

The translation read today was “change
your hearts and lives!
Here comes the kingdom of heaven.”

We often think of repentance, or change, as
that 180 degree turn from doing sinful things,
but, in this instance in Matthew,

is more like Jesus' call to be attentive toward
and to recognize a new reality that's coming
into being.

In fact, it's already here!

And remains here today.

When we look carefully, we see God's rule
beginning to take control. (Pause)

The kingdom of heaven is being seen in real time,
on the ground, right now.

Be they in frog and unicorn costumes standing
in front of armed and masked men, or
seen kneeling prayer in the the streets,
and in prayer vigils at the capitol.

The reign of God is present when we
act and advocate together.

Differing faiths uniting in shared values.

Religious and non-religious people speaking out
and standing up together even when guns are
thrust in the face.

“The kingdom of God has come near.”

Where God is seen as people protect innocent people
no matter the threat.

AMEN!