

Getting to Know Jesus, the Christ

Brentwood Presbyterian Church

January 12, 2014

The Light of a *Tekton*

Mark 6:2-3 & Psalm 29

(631, 345, 348, 748)

I was talking this week with friends from Toronto about how they had managed through the recent ice storm.

Their power was out for 3 days.

Their cable and telephone was out for 7 days.

A neighbour's tree fell into their back yard and had destroyed their garden.

They were drained by the stress of getting things back to normal.

One of the things David mentioned was the difficulty of getting around the house in the dark.

As familiar as you are with where things are, you normally maneuver around your house in the light or with the lights on.

He ended up with a bad bruise on his leg from bashing it into a chair.

The moral of that incident –
light helps us see things better.

In the Christian tradition, the period of time after Christmas is called Epiphany.

It's the season of light.

Significantly, it happens during the darkest time of the year in our part of the world –
in the bleak mid-winter.

Speaking of 'bleak,'

I heard a new and intriguing word this week.

It was on the CBC afternoon show.

Stephen Quinn started talking about a 'bleakometre,' something to measure the bleakness of the weather.

The word stuck with me throughout the week as I was pondering this text and sermon.

We need light to disperse the bleakness in our lives.

Our deepest bleakness comes from feeling that we are alone,
abandoned, isolated, deserted.

Anxiety and fear quickly follow.

We desperately seek ways of connecting with people
or dulling the pain of loneliness.

Those ways usually rely on people or substances
that do not have the capacity
to break through and solve our loneliness.

The only reliable and lasting resolution
to our sense of bleakness
is to consent to, to accept,
the reality of God being with us –
in every moment of our lives
and in every dimension of our lives.

That is what the light of Epiphany –
literally, a manifestation or revealing of reality
through something simple and striking –
does.

It shows us who God is and how God is with us.

Over the next five weeks,
as we receive together a deeper and richer understanding
of who God is in Jesus, the Christ,
and how the Spirit continues to connect us with that God,
we will be looking at the light shed on our lives
by the ways in which God took flesh and dwelt among us,
“full of grace and truth,” as John says in his gospel.

This morning, I want to say a few things
about the social class and setting
Jesus came into and grew up in.

‘Tekton’ is a Greek word
and means ‘craftsperson,’ or ‘tradesperson.’
In the Gospels, it is usually translated as ‘carpenter.’
Such people were often itinerants,
moving around the community from job to job,
making household furniture or agricultural implements.
They would have gotten to know the community well,
seen its pains and its joys,
its problems and its possibilities,
its challenges and its opportunities.

There is another dimension of the meaning of *'tekton'*
that Jesus scholars have discussed recently.
'Tekton' can also mean 'scholar' or learned person.'

So, my impression is that Jesus was born into and grew up among
the working classes in his community.
In addition, he grew up as a faithful Jew
and was well-schooled in the wisdom of Judaism,
so well-schooled, in fact,
that he ended up questioning
the ways in which the religious and political authorities of his day
interpreted and applied that faith.

His studies shed new light on the nature of God
and what it meant to be in relationship with God.
It had nothing to do with conformity to religious/political authority
as a way to achieve personal and social purity.
It had everything to do with an intimate relationship with a loving Father
as a way to be a blessing to all others.

In whom and with whom God chose to take flesh
shed important light on who God is and what God is doing.
God did not choose to come as one of the power elites
in that society.
He chose to come as a peasant worker
in a community that took the Scriptural witness to his grace seriously.
Jesus worked hard.
He knew the whole community intimately.
He studied the ways of God seriously.

If we have been given the gift of living 'in Christ,'
as the apostle Paul assures us,
then we too are enabled to
work hard,
know our whole community intimately,
and study the ways of God seriously.

Christianity is not a faith that leaves the rich and powerful unchallenged.
We will see that more fully next week
when we explore Jesus' first sermon.
Mark's account of the beginning of his public ministry
in his home town synagogue
does not mention the text he used.
Luke's account, that we'll consider next week, does.
It's from the prophet Isaiah and does challenge the rich and powerful.

Jesus' interpretation and application of such prophetic texts
got people angry.
Mark records the reaction of the leaders of the synagogue.
Who is this 'tekton'
to make such bold claims and challenging applications
of the Jewish Scriptures that we have found so comforting and supportive
to our privilege and power?
This is offensive.
We have to get rid of this upstart.

Yet the text says Jesus astounded 'many' and got them angry,
but not all.
That suggests to me that there were others in the synagogue,
and even more in the community beyond the synagogue,
who heard his prophetic and provocative interpretation of the Scriptures
as a breath of fresh air.
Indeed, they heard it as the breath of the Spirit of God
flowing anew through a community
that had become stifling and oppressive in its rigid demands for purity.

The faith Jesus described and embodied
freed all people to live joyfully in the light of God's love.

Another word that has been used to translate 'tekton'
is 'builder.'
Jesus came as a builder – of essential furniture and implements,
of a deep and faithful understanding of our companionship with God,
and of the communal ways in which we support each other's flourishing.

That's the light, at least as I see it,
that God sheds on our faith
by the social class and setting
in which Jesus matured.
It's a light that breaks through the bleakness of seeming to be alone
and reveals to us the loving Father and the welcoming family
that surround us every second of our lives.

*May God fill us all with the joy and resilience
of the love, aspiration, and faith that we see in Jesus, the Christ,
with the LAFter of Jesus Christ,
and be with us as we go forth this week to bless the world.*

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