

Do Not Be Afraid

Luke 5:1-11

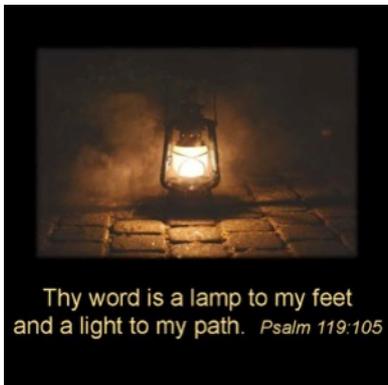
Jesus says, "I will make you fishers of people. Don't be afraid." And we hear that they got up, left everything, and followed him.

It's a big day, isn't it? And I'm sure you all have your stories to tell. Do let me know in coming days if there is anything you'd like to share with me as this time of major change occurs.

One thing I know is that saying good-bye is something I do not like to do. I find it hard to speak words which are adequate for the time, for the occasion.

I wonder how it was for those first disciples as they met their Lord and he bid them leave everything and to follow him and forever have their lives changed. I wonder how it must have been for Abram and Sarai as God called them also to leave everything and to go — and Abram was even older than this church — he was 75 when it was time to go.

What must it have been like for them as they left so much of their story, what they knew and loved behind; and what needed to be left to God they left behind. They left the things which brought them immense joy and certainty to follow Jesus. They also left behind those things which hurt and which were dark and they followed him in his footsteps to the place of forgiveness and where Jesus promised to take their burdens on himself and carry them.

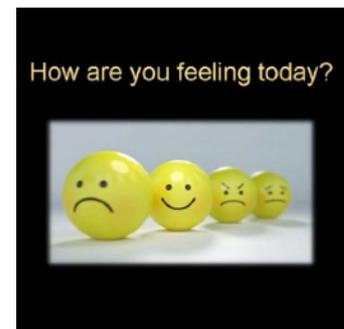


Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. As we take leave of this place, we also called by Jesus to leave behind at his cross those things which have caused us hurt and which continue to take hold of us; those times and things when our light has not shone; our lantern has been dark. Don't be afraid Jesus says, I am calling you forward. My Word is a lamp to your feet and light to your path. Leave behind the things of sin which hinder and which tear down and tear apart. Leave them at my feet, at my cross and in exchange receive my body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. The sweet exchange as Luther would call it.

Write down using the pew cards anything which weighs on your heart and which you may wish to leave here with Jesus. During

Holy Communion distribution you can leave these here and they will be sensitively and confidentially burned later and the ashes included with those for next year's ash Wednesday service. Jesus is here among us. Give him any hurts.

How are you feeling today? As we finish our ministry and mission based here at 711 Station Street, our ministry here, our mission together, we don't stand alone. As Elli Kleimann left this earth yesterday, so many others have gone before us on the journey of faith. There's a great cloud of witnesses in fact who have gone before you; before us and who cheer us on today as God calls us to continue to run the race with perseverance, giving thanks to God, and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.



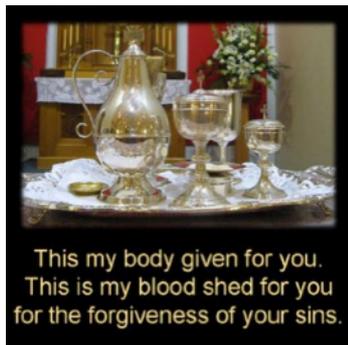
How are you feeling today? I am sure we all give thanks to God this day. Thanks for one another; thanks for God's amazing grace as we've heard the Word of God; had it work in us in baptism and at the altar; and as we've received in friendship and shared it in serving. As individuals and families have been shaped by God here...

How are you feeling? Well, I encourage you to share your stories with one another today and share the hope you have in Christ. I don't know about you, but what I know about me is that today I feel inadequate.

One thing I do know is that any words I say today will be inadequate for such a time as this.

And you know I think that's just the point... my words are inadequate, my feelings fickle, my views limited; but the good news always is that

God's word of promise in Jesus will never fail us. He is the same yesterday, today, and always. The wonderful news is that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us. And he won't fail us. "I am with you always." "This my body given for you. This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." Today and always.



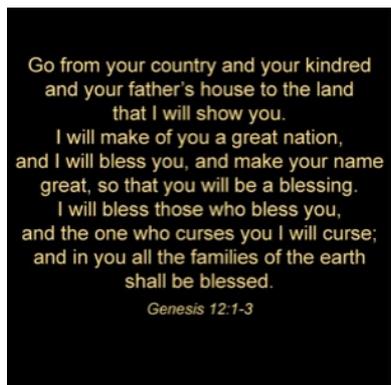
We started our farewell Sundays with celebration of baptism...

We celebrated people confirming their faith and coming to Holy Communion for the first time and shared the words of the faithful in the creeds of the church and promise of the Lord's Supper.

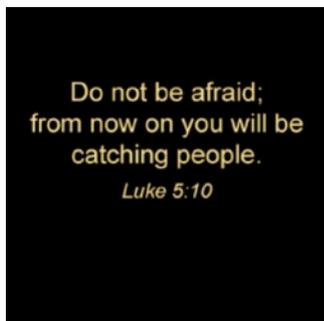
We focused on the promises of God to those who come together in marriage and all of us as part of his body in this community; the word proclaimed and taught as we remembered the pastors and saints who have been here at Station Street.

My words are indeed totally inadequate but God's Word of promise is sure; that same Word that goes with us as a light to our feet and a lamp to ur path. Let's remind ourselves from our readings today of those words to Abram and Sarai:

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be



a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." That is the promise as we go from this place.



And God says as we go from this place, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." What a promise — and what a *commission* as we go this day.

The same promise that brought the life of Christ to Station Street and built a place of worship, fellowship, a place from which to serve and to become God's fishers of people; this promise leads us to Riversdale Road today. God in Christ is surely with us.

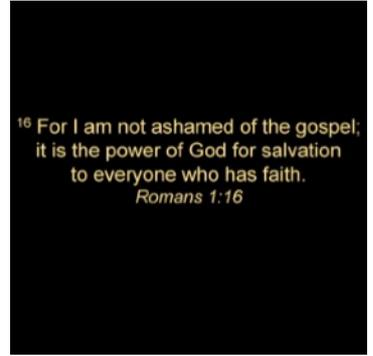
So let the final word be the word of promise from God through the apostle Paul; let this word be our guide, our hope, our treasure as we thank God today, and as he continues to build us as his

priesthood of believers in the world. Let the final words from this pulpit be the word of God through St Paul the apostle in Romans chapter 1, and let these be the words that carry St Paul's forward:

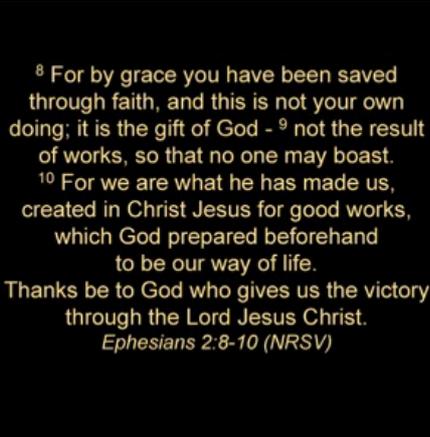
I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

The Gospel, freely given, and freely enacted for you! That's God's promise today.

And again St Paul says in Ephesians 2, and you'll probably know these words very well:



¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.
Romans 1:16



⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast.
¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.
Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 2:8-10 (NRSV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Dear friends — thanks be to God who gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

“And they left everything, and followed him.”

Amen.