

Darkness

The winter days of the Northern hemisphere can be tough. You get up in the dark and go off to work before the sun has risen and when you've done your days labour you come home with the sun set and the darkness all around. For months the sun seems hidden, and it's a fact that it has an effect upon us since our spirits droop when the days are dank and the atmosphere gloomy. At the heart of this season of darkness Christianity proclaims the coming of the light. Isaiah in his prophetic words anticipates the dawning of this light which in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is made flesh. His appearance amongst us calling us to *follow him* remains for all, the pathway out of our spiritual darkness and into the light of God's love. But is the message which he brings and which we proclaim listened to any longer? Are we still living in a spiritual darkness, where the light of Christ has yet to shine, a hinterland where conscience and moral formation have no realm?

When Jesus called the disciples he made them a promise: *Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men*. The words seem plain enough but what exactly do they mean, and what impact do they have in influencing and shaping the issues that dominate our agenda. When we are confronted with the task of how to resolve the problems of injustice and inequality or the imbalance between the haves and the have nots, how are the sentiments that lie at the centre of those words, able to make any difference?

Three things. Firstly there is the call: *follow me*. There has to be action. I have to resolve to do something and this decision becomes the beginning of the journey. Where does it lead? Well certainly it is a path way that takes up the full gamut of human experience, there is no bailing out. Following Jesus involves a total immersion into all that the human spirit is. It is a real exploration and examination of what it means to be human. This journey will make us delve deeply into our inner selves, challenging us to justify our actions in terms of how the gospel calls upon us to act.

Secondly there is the means: *fishermen*. We are all of us given different talents and skills and it is how we use them on this journey which will ultimately shape how we proclaim Christ. We notice that both before and after their calling Peter and Andrew, James and John remained fishermen. That is what they were and like them, we can't be anything other than who we are. It is in applying ourselves to the task of proclaiming the gospel with the means which we have been given, that our true identity is made plain. The honesty that this presents to the world becomes the light that we hold up against the darkness through which we travel. My life as a follower of Christ shines forth in and through the experiences which form me.

Thirdly there is the end: *men*. It is by the relationships which we make that our deeds and our motives find and reach fruition. The gospel and our coming to understand it necessarily becomes our motivation. This is the Good News and it's free and available and we want to offer it to everyone. This is most perfectly achieved through love and we can only love by being drawn deeper and deeper into a relationship with Jesus through his revelation that we are loved by a God who has come into our lives as a real person who walked our earth as one like us.

Jesus, in his call to those fishermen is telling the world that the light has dawned.