

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 26th January 2014

THEME: EPIPHANY – Covenant Sunday

As we Gather

On Sunday we were given the opportunity to express (put into words) our response to God's offer of a sustained relationship with Him. We promised (or reaffirmed our promise) to live our lives in a manner which will please Him and keep us in His presence at all times.

Reading Scripture **Psalm 27 : 1 & 4 - 9** and **Matthew 4 : 12 - 23**

Thinking together

Fear is a dark and imprisoning place. We have all known fear / know fear, and long to be free from it and its effects on our lives. King David knew this when he wrote Psalm 27. (verse 1)

Name the types of fears you have experienced / still experience. How do you deal with these? Discuss

David was known as a 'man after God's heart'. (Psalm 27:4-9)

Why was he called this? Discuss

What do you understand by the phrase 'to practice the presence of God'? Discuss

After His time of desert retreat consolidating His life mission, Jesus returned to Galilee. He left home in Nazareth and moved to Capernaum, thus fulfilling prophesy (Isaiah 8:19 – 9:2).

Galilee was the most northerly district of Palestine and, although small, was the most obvious place for Jesus to start His ministry, being

- densely populated, with a great mixture of nationalities. All the major travel and trade routes passed through this region.
- Extremely fertile due to the Sea (or Lake) of Galilee. Surrounded by hills and mountains the soil was ideal for crops of all types and the lake itself was teeming with hundreds of different types of fish.
- Open to new ideas and non-Jewish influences. Geographically it was surrounded by Gentile nations and historically had undergone frequent invasion by conquering foreigners. Its people were quick tempered and volatile.

Jesus' message was the same as that of John the Baptist (Matthew 4:17). The call to repentance is unchanged today

What does this mean for you in terms of lifestyle? Discuss

There were some 204 villages in the region and 19 cities along the shores of the lake, so Jesus began His ministry in the synagogues, as these were the centre of Jewish life. By the time Jesus called His disciples (Matthew 4:18-22) he was no longer an unknown stranger.

The men invited to follow Jesus had no hesitation in responding at once to His call

Have you responded to Jesus' call to follow Him? When? / How? Discuss

Jesus chose ordinary, middle class working men. They were fishermen and because of their occupation must have developed characteristics such as – patience; perseverance; courage; ability to know when to act; self knowledge; knowledge of the different bait needed for the various types of fish

What characteristics do you think Jesus sees in you? Discuss

Matthew tells us (4:23) that Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching, preaching and healing.

The word Matthew used is the Greek word to refer to a herald's proclamation of a message from a king.

A herald making a proclamation on behalf of his king would speak –

- with the voice of certainty as he is proclaiming facts. Jesus spoke truth to give knowledge and understanding and defeat misinterpretations / misunderstanding.
- With the voice of authority as he is announcing the laws / wishes of the king. Jesus announced the Good News, thus defeating ignorance – the Kingdom of God is at hand, giving freedom, peace of heart, hope, and life with God to those committed to living the Good News.
- A message from beyond himself (from the king), and not give his personal opinion. Jesus revealed God

What kind of herald are you for Christ? Discuss

The healing Jesus brought, and still brings today, defeats human pain. His healing brings wholeness.

How have you experienced Jesus' healing in your life? Discuss

In Closing

Jesus calls us into relationship with Him when we follow His way. As His disciples we too are called to proclaim the Good News, using our experiences, our abilities, and our resources.

How do you feel called to promote the Kingdom of God through the church ministries?