

Sermon for 17 January 2021 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore, Md.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany/Human Relations Day

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 130:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-30; John 1:43-51

***“Follow the gleam.”***

There's a song in the Cokesbury Hymnal on page 182 that's been ringing in me all week. It speaks of knights watching on the mountain peak for a sign, and of the holy grail that Christ drank from with his disciples on the night that he was arrested, and of the gleam that shone from that cup, or grail, through the darkness.

The message is simple: Pay attention to the Spirit, always.

Follow, follow the gleam...

Life is so much more than science, or facts. Surely we know that, these days.

At every turn, we see, and hear, the absence of truth.

So a song brings us together, and helps us choose what's needed, and encouraging, now.

All the scriptures for today speak in this tone.

In a way, Paul's strong words to the church at Corinth address us most directly: You have work to do. You know how to act. You are examples. Never doubt what you say and do matters. How you live. How you treat one another. What you do differently than you would before you came into the light ...these are of God, these follow through on the mystery of being reborn into Christ.

Follow the gleam. Set time apart to pray each day. Treat yourself as the holy vessel you are. Never fail to sing the word that comes to you. I am loved. I am valued. I walk with friends. I am counted worthy ... I am called to reflect that, and share it, in clear and simple ways, moment by moment.

I realized again this week that Scripture is a springboard as well as a road map. As I read chapters from the prophet Isaiah, I'd first be cast down, and then lifted up, as the writer ... or the group of writers, the texts we have come from more than single pens and more than one council of elders ... I saw again, and more deeply, that this tool of holy scripture is to be applied with our own intuition and discussion. The word of God is stronger than any single interpretation, which is what makes Jesus so helpful ...a person like us, nearer than the closest partner or friend.

We read the news, listen to it, watch it ... and stand back from it. I pray over and over that we will become more useful to people around the world because of this world-wide pandemic ..

The incredible power of cooperation and sharing and listening ... We have much to learn, and certainly God is giving us that chance in this moment.

Thus may we follow, follow the gleam of truth: God is with us, and God is love.

Amen.