

A Dialogue Sermon for a New Congregation based on Genesis 12:1-4 and John 3:1-10

Go from your country and your kindred and your parents house to the land that I will show you
Go from your church where you have worshipped for 30, 40,50 years and go to a land I will show you

Wait, what, sorry.. what was that?

I want you to pick up your things and follow me.

Isn't that a different passage?

yeah but it's the same idea, it's basically you know, follow Jesus, follow God,

God's gonna ask you to do scary things

sometimes you gonna have to leave home

did you just summarise the gospel ?

pretty much

so what's the core message for today then smarty?

that in order for new things to happen sometimes we have to let go of the old

I don't like letting go

well that's what Lent is all about-

letting go of shadow letting go of darkness

letting go of guilt

letting go of fear

letting go of apathy

letting go with the things that bind us down

letting go of places and spaces where we worship for 30 40,50 years

anything else?

what do you mean is there anything else?

Is there anything else I have to let go of?

well maybe the kingdom of God

what!

Well the kingdom in the way that we used to think about it

like it was some great big colonising triumph

where we, as Christians had all the answers

and we could tell everybody what to think of what to do

why do I have to let go of that?

well because it's not true

what do you mean it's not true

I mean that we're part of a much bigger story

Nicodemus he's a faithful Jewish man, and in today's story he thinks that maybe

maybe there might be some other ways to experience God
so he goes to Jesus

in the darkness and he asks questions

or this church, for example,

it's built on land that was stolen over 200 years ago

and the people of this place

they were already sustained by the same god that we meet in Jesus ,
same Spirit, holy spirit.

I don't want to let go of the kingdom

Ok well maybe you could expand it..

What do you mean?

Well like in the first story Moses and Sarah have to leave the land

that they know, the land that they think is holy

and they travel into new lands

and the holiness expands,

its like God goes with them into the new,

like the cloths of heaven

Had I the heaven embroidered cloths unwrought with gold and silver light

I would spread the cloths under your feet

but I being poor have only my dreams

I have spread my dreams under your feet

tread softly for your trading on my dreams

Very pretty- so what's your dream for this community?

Um.. My dream is that we get to know each other

that we learn to love each other

My dream is that we open our space to the community,

that we pay the rent

that we grow the garden

that we fight for justice..

Yes justice...

my dream is that we get to know our neighbours

Who are our neighbours?

people in the park towers behind us,

our friends at the drop in at st kilda

the families walking past the church going to the market

the kids at Albert Park secondary school who are gonna be using our hall

the folk who work at uniting

Do they know why we are here?

Do you know why we are here?

Um....To keep the rumour of god alive?

Yes and....?

To speak truth to power?

Yes and..?

To listen deeply to God..Dadidrii and to..

To encourage each other

To weep with those who are weeping

To bear witness

To love justice

to walk humbly with our God

to be this little light

to be this little salt

This little love- Hey you know what what -from little things big things grow

Ooh...Maybe we should get a bell?

That might annoy the neighbours

It would let them know we're here

Do you know there was a ringing of the church bells called The Angelus?

Its a call to prayer from the Angel Gabriel,

and the ringing of the church bells is the voice of the angels

reminding people that God is here

Right here, in this place, shining..

(sings) Here in this place the new light is shining

Alright... will talk to Church council about getting a bell

can we?

We will see.

Did Nicodemus get any answers to his questions when he went to see Jesus in the dark

Well I think so...I mean he brought the spices to anoint Jesus body

and he helped Joseph to bury him, So, he risked his life for him

Wow..That was brave, we have to be brave don't we...Poor Jesus- Its a big story -this story of ours isn't it?

It is...are you ready?

This day and all days

Amen

Rev Alex Sangster and Rev Deacon John Tansey. 5 March 2023.
St Kilda South Port Uniting Church.