

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O Lord our God, who has given your word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path: grant us grace to receive your truth in faith and love, that by it we may be prepared unto every good word and work, to the glory of your name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

That Which Is Received

(February 7, 2010. Psalm 138; Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13); Luke 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Wesley Memorial United Church, Moncton, 11:00.)

What sort of story teller are you?

I come from a tradition of story tellers,

that of Newfoundland.

I can remember my family being incensed

about Newfoundland jokes,

because the real stories

were far funnier.

POWER IN STORY TELLING

There is power in the story telling.

This is what

Paul was saying to the people in Corinth.

They had been so busy

with their infighting,

their focus on other stuff.

They had forgotten the story

which had changed their lives,

and are listening to other stories instead.

Story teller Andrew Greeley

has a story

about how we can get

our stories confused;

A famous novelist came back to his home town after many years.

He had pledged to contribute two million dollars for a new hospital. Many of his friends from his school days were invited to a reception for him and his wife. Some of them ignored the invitation. Why only two million, they muttered. He could have paid for the whole hospital with all the money he has. The rest went to the party, but they were not particularly happy about the whole event. Who does this guy think he is?

He'd been a quiet, unobtrusive little guy when he was in school, the kind of person you'd hardly notice. He generally was not invited anywhere. None of the women in his class would have considered dating him if they had been asked, only he never asked. They had heard rumors that his novels were about the town and about them. They believed the rumors of course, but since they hadn't read any of his books, they didn't know for sure. He had to find a freshman to take to the senior prom! So he'd made a lot of money on his novels? Why did that make him a big deal? OK give the money for the hospital, but you should have given more with all you have, but don't show up in town and expect us to cheer for you. You're not a big deal now and you never were. Nor were they impressed with the beautiful woman he had married. (They had known her as an obnoxious freshman.) Anyone can look beautiful if her husband has a lot of money. She was still cheap despite all their money. They didn't join the receiving line, because they didn't want to have to talk to either of them. However, he had the nerve to walk around the room and say hello to everyone and recall incidents from their school days which they never remembered.

They tried to be polite but it was very hard. Then they went home and said to their children.

He's not a big deal. He never was.

Paul tells the Corinthians,

they were focusing on the wrong story;
that they need to get focused back
on the story they heard.

A story which began

with Jesus appearing to Peter.

It is a story

which went from person to person,
a story
in which each person can participate
and be lead
into the presence of God.

INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

This is the message of the hymn

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

that there is News
which is ours to share.

It is a story

which calls to us.

It is a story

which is received.

That was the experience

of Isaiah.

He was one

who lived in the midst of the story.

He was likely

a priest in the temple.

Unlike many of the other prophets

who lived on the outside

of the official cultus,

he was an insider.

But for some reason

he had not owned the story.

Yet one day in the temple

God becomes real

and Isaiah

is invited to be part of the story.

And Isaiah

becomes part of the story.

James Howell

asks the interesting question

about who showed up

in the temple:

God or Isaiah?

(James C. Howell, *Feasting on the Word*, p. 319).

Did God suddenly become present

or did Isaiah finally show up?

I suspect that was how those fishermen felt

in today's Gospel.

Here they are,

tired after a long day

and Jesus commandeers their boat

as a teaching platform.

When he finishes teaching

he tells them to sail again

and where to cast their nets.

And they are successful.

For these fisherman

the presence of God

had come to them.

At the same time

they responded.

The story most of them

had heard for years

had become real

and they received it.

IMPLICATIONS

So what are the implications for us?

Where are we

in the story of God

who has become real

through Jesus of Nazareth?

That takes me back

to the question of story telling
with which I began.

It is a question of your story telling.

Tom Bandy

asked the question

What is there about my experience of Jesus Christ that this community
cannot live without? (Jeffrey Jones, *Feasting on the Word*, p. 331)

This is the question

as we work toward our future
here in Moncton.

We have a great story here;

beginning when the Methodists of Coverdale
extended their mission to Moncton.

It is a story of continued expansion and change.

But it is one

which will only be real

as we tell our stories

and listen for God's story.