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The sermon text for today is based on the Gospel, Matthew Chapter 4, verses 12 to 23..

Provided by The Lutheran Church of Australia

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In a world where people seem to be crying out for the truth do they cry out because they know they are living in darkness? It seems so often however that for many they cry out for the truth and yet they don't want to hear the truth.

In today's text we have a wonderful insight into the truth Jesus Christ.

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

Jesus goes to the land of Capernaum, by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. Of course these were the tribal territories allotted to two sons of Jacob but the land now is under Roman rule.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus speaks the truth. Repent for the kingdom has come near Jesus the kingdom of God is walking among the people who are living in darkness.

Here the truth Jesus really challenges people. Which kingdom or rule do you support or give allegiance to? This is a call for all of us to think again about where our heart is.

Do you find yourself too busy in life? If you stop and listen to how many times you say that you are busy when someone asks how you are, is this mantra starting to become who we are and not something we are doing? Is our heart just too busy to be in Jesus? Are we living for the kingdom of our human life and not for Jesus?

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus calls you too. Come follow me and I will teach you to fish for people. You and I are called always to serve our Lord Jesus by serving others, sharing God’s love with each other, listening to the struggles and needs of others and bringing the very word Jesus to them, reminding each other they are forgiven and living in Jesus where He shines His light through your words and actions.

Last Sunday I had the wonderful privilege of baptising a young girl. As part of the baptism rite I asked her parents and godparents do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways? To which the parents and sponsors lay their allegiance to Jesus yes I do renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways.

In other words whose team are you playing on in life. Do you want to play on God’s team or the devils team?

Jesus in our text today asks that question – do you play on the team of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the Roman Empire?

What about you? Jesus, just as He called those to repentance in His day, calls us to live a life of repentance. He calls us to follow Him and obey His word. This is not to earn a good spot in heaven, for we cannot free ourselves from sin or eternal death. We cannot save ourselves this is why Jesus was born the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

We respond to the great love of God who first loved us. Love one another Jesus says as I have loved you. Follow me and I will make you fishers of people. Come to me all of you who are weary from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest.

Jesus calls us to follow but as we follow we serve Him by serving one another.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Jesus' work had begun and that work continues both in you and through you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So which team are you on? Whom do you serve?

Do you find it easier to serve yourself when you are busy or when things are hard? Perhaps you serve other gods that you find your heart attracted to – gods such as fame, money or power or gods of addiction.

We sisters and brothers have one God and it is Him we serve. Yet we fail. We fall short of serving our God well or even at all sometimes.

The greatest news is Jesus doesn't quit on us. In Psalm 23 we hear the words of king David, goodness and mercy, or goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. This word follow is so strong. You see we follow Jesus but God's love in Christ doesn't follow us rather it pursues us.

The Hebrew meaning for this word translated as follow is the word used for military campaigns. The word is to pursue but not just a bit. The word is to pursue the enemy to the ends of the earth. Here in Psalm 23 we get an insight into what God's love does in Christ. God's goodness, love and mercy pursues us to the ends of the earth – even to the grave. God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to save, not to condemn but to save the lost, those walking and living in darkness – yes you and me and all people before the light of Christ shines in them and they are claimed as His own.

So who's team are you on? The kingdom of God Jesus Christ lives in you by His word planted in your heart. That word Jesus grows as you continue to walk with Him. He remains in you and you remain in Him.

Which team are you on? Today again you can hear the words of Jesus repent. So repent and turn back to God and God's word and ways. It is never too late to turn back to God.

Repentance is not something we just say yep I repent, rather it is a turning away from sin, from the other worldly team of self and the desires of the flesh and to turn back to God who is faithful.

In Jesus your sins are forgiven and you are free to follow and serve the Lord Jesus in all you do.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus hold you fast on His team to eternal life for as you believe your sins are forgiven and you walk no longer in the darkness but in the light of Christ. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen