

Driven To Be Ready

You've heard the story of the Christmas Guest. It usually plays on the radio about a thousand times between now and the end of the year. It's about an old man, named Clarence, who has a dream that Jesus is coming to visit him on Christmas day. The dream is so real that he cancels his plans for visiting his friends on Christmas day and stays home waiting for the Messiah to come. He cooks food, cleans his house, builds a nice warm fire, puts on his best clothes and waits. The rest of the story is a lesson in how the messiah comes to us in ways we don't expect. For Clarence, the messiah was a hungry soldier coming home from war who needed shoes, a woman gathering wood and needing a coat, and a small lost child. In each case, Clarence did not think he was helping his expected honored guest and he used the things that he had prepared for the Messiah to help those who came to his door. Yet each time he served the least of the kingdom, Clarence was serving the Lord, and in fact was serving the Lord right there where he was.

Clarence believed the Messiah was coming to see him so he did everything he could to make sure that when Jesus came he would feel welcome. He cleaned his house, prepared warm food and drink and made sure his home was warm and inviting. He was a one-man Church council practicing stewardship, mission, and goal-oriented leadership, driven by vision. His mission statement was Jesus is coming to see me today and everything he did was directed toward that goal.

Being prepared meant that Clarence was ready to meet the needs of those who came to his door. He didn't recognize the Messiah because he was expecting a king. But Jesus came to him three times. Are we prepared to meet Jesus when he comes to us? Do we really think that we would recognize

Jesus if he was here with us today? Some would say sure the guy in the long robe and sandals would easily stand out in this crowd? But what about his ability to look like everyone else. Mary didn't recognize Jesus right away at the tomb. The disciples didn't recognize him when he appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. Jesus could very easily be sitting among us right now and we wouldn't know unless he made himself known. So, shouldn't we be treating each other as if he were here? Shouldn't we be making our church warm and inviting so that Jesus will feel welcome when he comes, because each person we welcome might be the Messiah?

What is our mission statement? Just like Clarence our mission statement should be the goal that drives us to be ready for the King to come visit us. The mission statement of The United Methodist Church is: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. God has placed this church here for a reason. How are we doing? Are we serving the people of this community right where we are? Are we transforming the world that is within our reach? The Bible scriptures for today are saying that Jesus is going to come again. In fact, he is nearer to us now than ever before.

(Isa 64:1-4 NIV) Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!

² As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!

³ For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

Psalm 80: 1 – 3 Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth

² before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.

³ Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

I Corinthians 1: 3 – 9 ³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way-- with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge--

⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Just like Clarence was driven to get ready to meet his Christmas guest, we need to be driven to get ready to meet our honored guest. The way to get ready is through prayer for the good of the church and the community; learn the ways of God and teach them to others; do as much good as you can; and know that the time for waiting is shorter now than ever. The king is coming, and we must be prepared.