

Darkness and shadows

Clarity and light

These are telling signs of what it is to become a disciple

To become a disciple

Because that is our calling

We will never finish this project

We will never become perfect disciples

We are on this path

And we continue on this path until our last days on earth

Striving for this perfection

Dealing with moments of darkness and shadows

Reaching for the clear view of daylight

Becoming a disciple of Christ is difficult and challenging

Because it means there is a death to our ego

To what I want and my desires

This is what the ancient Israelites were experiencing

It was following their own ways that took them from following God

They broke his covenant with them

The Israelite nation had split into the north and south

The north was the region of Zebulun and Naphtali

This is the land of Samaria

Where they set up their own temple and place of worship

They were the first to experience being conquered

The Assyrians had defeated them

They were slaves in their own land

They were dwelling in a land of gloom and darkness

And here Isaiah brings another promise of relief

A light will come

The yoke that burdened them will be removed

The rod of the taskmaster will be smashed

In our Gospel from Matthew we hear a synopsis of this reading

The promised light has arrived

Israel is once again under the thumb of a foreign power

This time it is the Roman Empire

And the people are looking for their Messiah, their redeemer

Nazareth is in the northern region of Israel

Still known as a land of rebellion

From this land of darkness, a light has come

This light is Jesus Christ

In him we see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah

Capernaum is also in the same region

So when he returns to Capernaum to begin his ministry

He is entering enemy territory for the people of Jerusalem

But he has come for all people

This is where he calls his first disciples

To unite the north and the south

The Jews and Gentiles alike

Out of darkness comes a light

This would have all made sense to the Jews in the time of Christ

To the early Christians

We see today the effect he has on those he called

Peter and Andrew

James and John

Leaving everything

Immediately following him

Living in the north

**It was their ancestors that had rejected the covenant and
followed their own ways**

These disciples are invited into a new covenant

These totally practical fishermen

Act in an impractical way

They had spent years building businesses

And at his word

His invitation

They walk away

They are not going into something established

They have no clear future ahead of them

Only an invitation

Come follow me

And I will make you fishers of men

It was not going to be an easy life for them

And it is not an easy life for his disciples today

It was a decision that required action

Peter and Andrew did not say

Thanks for thinking of us

We'll talk about this with our families and get back to you

Give me your cell and I will text you in a day or 2

No, they immediately followed

The same with James and John

They were in the boat fixing nets with their father

They did not even finish that day's task

They left their father and hired hands in the boats

And followed

This is the meaning of being a disciple

Taking action

Wherever we are

With whomever God has placed in our lives

Being a disciple is not reserved for priests and deacons and sisters

It is for everyone

Being a disciple is not thinking about it

It is not analyzing what it entails

More than one person has analyzed the call to death

To be a disciple takes courage, strength and action

It cost John the Baptist his life

In one way or another it cost each Apostle his life

It has cost every saint his or her life

It will cost us our life as well

Each person has a specific way to put this into practice

But putting it into practice is being a disciple

And that means sacrifice

How many like eating

But not the shopping, preparing and cooking

How many want health

But not the exercise

How many want good grades

But no home work

How many want to be good at baseball or basketball

But don't want to practice

The same in our spiritual lives

James and John give us a good example today

They are in their father's boat

Repairing and straightening the nets

Most of us here just put away their Christmas tree lights

No matter how careful you were putting them away

What will they be like next fall when it is time to get them out again?

A ball of lights all twisted and tangled

It never fails

And it can take hours straightening them out

Fishing nets are similar

When they are tossed from the boat they get twisted

They get torn

They need to be straightened and repaired

How often do we want to straighten out our spiritual lives?

But are we ready to do what is called for?

We want to quit gossiping

We want to get out of bad relationships

We have bad habits of pride and arrogance

Rash judgments

So many addictions affect our lives

Physical and spiritual

These nets are dragging us down, away from God

And sometimes it is best to just leave them in the boat

Walk away

Accepting his invitation to come follow him

It is not leaving our families or jobs

It is leaving behind old ways of living

And that is far more difficult

When our ancestors were told to Go West

It was a way of saying start a new life

Leave the old behind and forge ahead

That was only the answer if they left the baggage behind as well

To go west and bring everything with you won't change anything

Except our vantage point

We are called to Go East (traditionally churches face East)

To the new light that has risen

To leave behind everything that keeps us from Him

The problems in our lives are not about where we live

But how we live

It is not about how much we have

Or don't have

It is about what we do with what we have

It is not about searching for the truth

It is being open to the truth

And embracing the truth when it finds us

Allowing the truth to form new hearts

The reign of God is near

It is all around us

We can build fences to try keeping it at bay

Or we can knock down the gates

Risk a new way of living

Let go of those old nets of our past sins and memories

Letting go of the darkness and shadows

And live in the new light of Jesus Christ