

**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**