

“Becoming and Transforming”

February 11, 2024
King City United Church
Rev. Padre Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Love, forgiveness, and understanding are epiphanies to us, Holy One. As we gather to worship, we seek the illumination of Christ, the redeeming power of your presence, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, calling us to wholeness and holiness. Come, O Word of Hope and Healing. Soften our hearts so that we might receive your word. **Amen.**¹

Scripture Readings:

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

¹⁶ If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a wage, but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸ What then is my wage? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹ For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might gain all the more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to gain Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might gain those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not outside God’s law but am within Christ’s law) so that I might gain those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I might become a partner in it.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

¹ Robin Wardlaw, *Gatherings 2023/2024 Year B, Advent-Christmas-Epiphany*, 47.

<Children's Time>

Hello, my friends who are young at heart! It's good to see you again at this beautiful sanctuary, and I hope you are inspired, encouraged and blessed by all the teachings we share today. God loves you, God forgives you, God doesn't give up on you, and God has a fantastic vision for each one of you in your future. How do I know? And how do we know; how do we know God's vision and plan for me? Listen, my friends: Whenever you turn on your heart and tune the frequency of your inner radio to God, you instantly know that God is always giving you messages for you. Here, I brought a picture: Do you know who he is?



His name is Dan Carter; He is currently the mayor of Oshawa. He was elected two times in a row as the mayor in 2018 and 2022 and has done good things for the homeless and drug addicts in his city. But you know what? Before serving publicly, he had spent dark times until he was 31.

He was homeless, illiterate and struggling with a drug and alcohol addiction that left him isolated from most of his friends and family. Yes, he was homeless, always sitting on the street; yes, he had an addiction; and yes, Dan Carter was illiterate- at the age of 31, he was not able to read and write. Nothing could be worse in his life. One day, his sister Maureen shouted at him, saying, "Ether die or sober up!" It was not a cheesy nor pleasant-sounding encouragement, but, according to him, his sister's shout woke him up. Probably, God spoke to him through Maureen's mouth. And he decided to change himself, and good things happened in his life.

One day, in the middle of becoming a good man, including learning how to read and write, he decided to attend a local church in his town and asked for advice from the minister of the church. The minister said: "I need you to read a Christian journal named 'The Message,' two pages every day, and we are going to meet on a regular basis." While reading and reflecting on the selected passages and messages, he found that Jesus was surrounded by such bad guys and that God and Jesus never gave up on those bad guys. Never! So he was tremendously shocked and inspired by that. He was able to accelerate himself, changing into a good and better person. When he opened his heart and tuned in with God, God sent a life-changing message to him. Since then, he knew God had a marvelous vision for him to serve others; he pushed himself to live the life of a public servant and became a mayor with 70% of the votes in 2018. Isn't it amazing? Since Dan Carter was born, God had a vision for him. Even when he was homeless and drug-addicted, God had a plan for him. God had a very special plan for him. Then, eventually, he became a mayor in God's vision, and it is not the end of the plan: He is becoming and transforming throughout God's vision, and that vision is still working within him.

My friends, God also has a wonderful vision for you, and the vision is in process in your life. You are becoming and transforming towards God's vision regardless of your age. Therefore, my friends! Trust God, who has an excellent plan for you this year. God is working for you; God is working within you! May God be with you at this moment!

<Reflection>

I'll tell you one story of my previous experience in ministry. About 25 years ago, I started my ministry as a pastor for children, youth, and young adults. I had to preach for adults. The adult group split into two groups according to age. The first group is over 30 and the other group is over 60. During weekdays, I led two adult Bible study groups. On Saturdays I facilitated a youth group from 1 to 9 p.m. While I prepared the youth group gathering, children came over and dangled around me and swung on my back and neck. On Sunday, I preached for youth or sometimes for adults, and I led a gathering of the young adults until late afternoon. I had to have a fun time with kids, lead youth, preach for adult groups, and inspire the young adults. It was very energy consuming but exciting and rewarding.

During these hectic and camouflage appearance of ministry, one of the young adults came to me and judged what I am doing, saying "Pastor Lee, I don't know who you are. You look like you have multiple personalities." I was really confused, so I indifferently responded with a straight face: "What do you mean?" The judgment continued: "When you play with kids, you look like a child, when you preach you look holy, but when you are with youth or young adult group you are so different and not holy at all!" I was not able to find the right words for this judgment. She must've thought that I would have had the exact same posture of ministry for all the generation. I know that she was young, and her judgment certainly came from the lack of knowledge about ministry, but I was also young and unprepared to answer her naïve and unpolished comments properly.

In the time of the New Testament, even Jesus received complaints from Jews, saying “Why do you drink and eat like munchers? Why do you have parties so often? Why do you eat with sinners and the unclean in a same table? Why are your disciples “working” on Sabbath days? Why are you having a conversation with a woman, who is Samaritan? Why are you protecting the naked lady who just committed adultery? OMG, are you holding a feast in the house of a tax collector? I can’t believe it!” Countless conversations of opposition were raised, but Jesus was not moved.

Even the Apostle Paul experienced similar things in his ministry. We don’t know what exactly happened to the Apostle Paul. We can only get hints from his remarks in the first Corinthians. In verses 20 and 22 of chapter 9 he says, “²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak.

As Jesus was accused by the Jews in his time, so was the Apostle Paul. So he had to explain about his ministry how he did all things to all people. Paul’s works are not for himself but for others; it was not for his benefit but for benefit of others. He was doing all this because of others, especially non-believers whom he wanted to evangelize to. Paul accentuates in verse 22 that “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.” Paul cannot “save” the people. Here it means, I believe, he wanted to invite them to Jesus for their redemption. Yes, he did everything that he could do to lead people to the genuine spiritual life.

This attitude applies to our ministry too. We easily think that only ministers are doing ministry, but I don't think this idea covers all the meaning and aspects of ministry. We, each one of you, are doing our own ministry, and we are co-operating for the Kingdom of God because we are all called to be the Church. I am declaring that everyone here is doing ministry for God. I hope I can inspire all of you here to have a dream of God, a dream from God, and a dream by God. I hope you can get divine insights through our praise, prayer and the Word of God in the worship service. I hope you can participate in the work of God through your intentional spiritual practice and your lived faith so that God's will may incarnate in your fruitful Christian life.

When the insight, intention, prayer, and living out are in you, then you are doing God's ministry. And when you know that you are not the only one who is striving for the Kingdom of God, the Christian co-operative community is possible. May God give you the wisdom and strength to continue God's ministry through each one of you. I gently invite you to ponder and pray for the meaning of Christian life, the repentance of your sins, and the divine plans prepared for you. When we pray I also want you to imagine Paul's ministry and how that may coincide with your life and ministry. Let us pray.