

Matthew 4:12-23

The Light Has Dawned

How many times has you used the phrase, "It dawned on me?" When your tummy growls and you find yourself saying, "It just dawned on me that I haven't eaten all day." Or losing you keys, you walk around the house and finally it *dawns on* you where you left them. That after spending five minutes retracing your steps!

Maybe it has been a little deeper thinking. You may have attended a conference or been a part of a conversation when something suddenly *dawns on* you. An idea, direction or decision makes sense because it finally *dawns on* you what was missing or needed to happen.

Using the words *dawned on*, basically means that something has suddenly become clear, maybe even certain. It is to begin to understand, or that something or someone is more understandable. It is finally grasping the meaning of an idea, realizing for the first time what is possible or at stake. It is about human perception and it comes from the idea of light coming in darkness.

I don't have to tell you that in the light things are clearer. In the darkness we may stumble around trying to find a light switch, but once the power gets from the electrical switch to the light bulb, well then everything becomes visible.

As I share I am also aware that for about 15% of people who are blind my analogies may fall flat as for them darkness is a totality. But I believe all can relate to what happens in our minds and hearts, maybe even our bodies, once we grasp the meaning of something or realize the impact of a thought.

In a reading from Isaiah we hear,

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined (Isaiah 9:2)

And again, in the reading from Matthew,

the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned (v16)

Could it be that this is what was happening when those four fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James and John, dropped their nets and followed Jesus?

In Matthew we are given no preamble as to why they just up and left what they were doing. We get no reasons or background, just that for Peter and Andrew, they “immediately...left their nets and followed him.” (v20) And for James and John, “immediately they left the boat *and* their father, and followed him.” (v22).

Could it be that somehow the light that was Jesus dawned on them when he passed by? We have no idea if there was something they knew about Jesus or if he had a long in-depth conversation with them before this call. All that the writer of the gospel of Matthew sensed was necessary for his Jewish audience that would be reading these words, was that Jesus called these two sets of brothers and they immediately followed.

At the time of this writing, the people of Israel were living in a kingdom that was not their own. Rome had taken hold of the land at this point, just as Assyria was in power in the time of the scripture written in Isaiah. They always held onto the hope that a Messiah would come and the land would once again be theirs. They hoped for an earthly king such as one with the power, strength, and authority of King David of old. So it could be that they thought this earthly man Jesus held some hope to be such a leader.

It is not likely that they understood in that moment what type of leader Jesus was, that he most certainly was a king, but one whose kingdom was not of oppression, of forcing out the Romans, but rather whose kingdom and power was defined by love, forgiveness, peace, and justice. The kind of justice that brings equity and hope, not despair for the most vulnerable.

There may have been some kind of light that they perceived when they met Jesus that compelled them to leave all that they knew, but it may also have been the promise, the hope, that their lives could be different if they were not serving the Roman Empire. It is likely that it took time for things to really *dawn* on them about what they had entered into and who Jesus was.

The stories in all four gospels tell of the fact that they would get close to understanding, but it is not until Luke writes the accounts of the apostles in Acts that we really get to see how the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, what they witnessed, and what it meant after the fact, that we see how the light dawned on those first followers of Jesus.

For most of us, it can take time for something really profound to dawn on us. It is like the morning; it is darkness and then as the sun rises more and more becomes visible to us. What may take us a long time to figure out...to have dawn on us...is God’s call on our lives. Unlike the immediate response of the fishermen, we seem to take a long time to figure out God’s call on our lives, if we ever figure it out or even think about it in the first place.

So often we go about our lives doing whatever comes before us. We make plans, we work, we retire, we age, and little do we ponder or ask, where is God in this? What is God calling me to do at this stage of my life or in a particular situation or opportunity?

Asking those questions can help us understand or have it dawn on us, what we are to do in order to live our lives in the abundance of love, grace, hope, and joy that God desires for us and for all people. It doesn't matter what age you have reached, God's love and desire for you to live an abundant life does not change or go away. When we consider God's call on our life in any given moment it may dawn on us what our meaning and purpose is in this time and place.

The same goes for the church. Our church has a calling, a purpose. Our work in the community of faith is to hear our call together, which takes conversations, prayer, discernment and at some point, it will dawn on us, whether slowly as when the morning is ushered in, or suddenly as when a light switch is turned on, what we are to be doing. What God is calling us to be and do in our time and place with the people who share this walk of faith.

The darkness we experience is our lives without Christ. It is not that life, especially in North America, is not fine for a good number of us, but when the light of Christ, that great light has dawned for us and on us, our lives take on a wholly other meaning and purpose. We no longer live just for ourselves, but for a God who calls us to be a light in the darkness pointing the way to love, grace, hope, and forgiveness so that other may live and have abundant life.

If you are someone that is struggling, the light of Christ dawning on you can mean that you finally make difficult decisions about your wellbeing and that of those you love. We can, through the dawning of Christ, the understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit, and the deep love of God, make changes in our lives that bring about transformation and wholeness that we never imagined. This can be the catalyst for change in work places, retirement homes, families, in circles of friends, in the church, and ultimately in our communities.

The light has dawned. It is the light of Christ in our lives and, through the Spirit working in us, we become light for others. Never underestimate the power of new understanding and insight, new light on a challenge or in a life. This is power we have been given in Christ whose light has dawned.

Matthew wrote, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light...light has dawned!" May the light of Christ dawn in your life today and every day, for you, for those you love, and for the world.

In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ, Amen.