

This is the time of year when sometimes I find myself holding my breath.

When I'm putting the lights on the roof. Sometimes. When I'm setting up decorations that I want to make sure that this one doesn't break or one of our children is holding them and I think it's going to be OK. And maybe you find yourself well kind of holding tight some times during this season wanting everything to go perfectly wanting to everything to be in order and then and then it doesn't always end up how we'd hope sometimes we hold ourselves tight and. It doesn't work out how we'd hoped this season is one of course in which our invitation from God our invitation from the church is not to hold tight but instead. To let go.

To breathe in and breathe out. We want to join me breathe in and breathe out.

It's a time of year when we have the chance to start over to begin again.

We get to breathe out all of the ink and that tight and the things that we've held onto you for the past months or maybe even a year to make space in our lives again.

Sometimes when it's making space for the decorations we have to arrange things differently. We have to make physical space in our lives for this time of year. And. We're also invited to make mental space to make spiritual space instead of holding on.

To let go.

And to invite Jesus to come into our lives again. This is what this season is about. It's a time to prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas to make space in our lives for God's love to be revealed again.

Because the story that was shared just a few moments ago isn't something that just happened a long time ago in a faraway place.

It's something that happens again and it's happening again. This year Christ is coming again for you for you for all the world and we can make space in our lives.

To let Christ come in. Sometimes we find ourselves. Holding tight.

And blocking God's path into our hearts and minds.

Advent is a time when we do the opposite. It's a time when we pause to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. A time to celebrate with grateful hearts the coming of Christ in the form of a little baby. We journey through these weeks with awe and wonder at the unfathomable love of God. That God would choose to pour God's self into a child.

Through Jesus that we might know love that we might be truly liberated from those things that we hold on tight to you. Are those things that we find that bind us that keep us from living the life that God has in mind for us.

We experience a different life orientation that shapes our vision our speech our thoughts and our actions. We seek to bear witness to the love of God in this world long after Christmas has come and gone. Advent is also the time when we name and remember that.

The things in this world are are not as they should be.

That forgiveness is not as widespread. We ourselves don't always offer or receive it from others. That restoration. Every Egyptian and justice is something that we are yearning for that we are longing for in the present day. When you look around the world when we see things are not as they should be. And yet we're waiting for a time when some day Christ will return and and all things will be made right.

Christ will come again and final victory. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We're

looking forward to it. We're anticipating it. And in the meantime we can make space. And we can act with compassion.

And mercy. We can see the light of Christ in other people as it's truly in each one of us.

For there's something about our lives. Sometimes.

Sometimes we miss Jesus because we haven't really understood how God is actually in our midst.

Sometimes when we're holding onto things they block our vision from Jesus. Who's right in front of us. From Jesus who's in our neighbors and in our community and Jesus who is hell at the gas station filling up their tank as well.

Who is checking out our groceries at the grocery store from Jesus. Who's walking the streets and you wonder where that person is going to live tonight. Where is Jesus going to sleep tonight. Will we make room.

We hold on to things that block us from seeing Jesus in others.

And Jesus invites us into a new way of seeing this year we see and the ministry and the teachings of Jesus that loving our neighbors means that we are meeting people where they are. It means looking at them and their lives. Looking at our own lives looking at the circumstances to see who someone is and how God is inviting us to be a reflection of this unconditional and accepting love in their life. Too

often we get caught up in the circumstances. Of our lives and in the lives of other people the circumstances that. Make it difficult for people to make a living.

To have enough food for their family to have a place that's warm and safe for each one to sleep. And yet when we find that we allow Jesus and the stories of this season to soak into our hearts we begin to notice the light of Christ in each person. No matter how hidden. It may be or how dim it may seem in the midst of what's going on in life.

Jesus invites us during the season to let down to let go to free ourselves from those things that block us from seeing Christ in others.

Because what's true for each person what's true for you and for me is that that God's love came before we took our first breath. God's

love came for us before we breathed the end for the very first time and there's nothing that can separate us from God's love. And. When we understand when we begin to let this soak in we're able. To love and accept others. Were able to help others see the light that in themselves. For. I don't know about you but sometimes I have a challenge of thinking that the light is shining very brightly in me. Sometimes that maybe people that you know maybe you find yourself today saying you know I'm just not worthy of this love. And this light.

And there are some things that I've done. I've hidden this slide and I've tried to blow it out at times. And I say things that make that hurt other people and I separate myself. And is it true that that really Christ could live in me.

And so if you find yourself in that place today know that it's true.

That you are a child of God that God loves you more than you can imagine. And this slide it may seem DMH but it is there and it shines. And if you find yourself in a different place today we have the opportunity that you had the opportunity to help remind people that it's there to help fan the flames to encourage them to clear the places that are blocking the view.

To see Christ in other people. To make space to allow that flame that light to grow and. To show.

The scripture reading for today is one of the most profound passages in the scripture that portrays Jesus as liberator as the one who sets us free.

At the synagogue Jesus appropriated the prophecy of Isaiah 61 as an interpretation of his own ministry of his own life stating that he was sent to preach the gospel the good news to those whose life chances were stifled economically socially physically or mentally.

And just as Jesus was saw this as his mission. We too are sent to offer words that heal that empower and that liberate. One of the powerful ways that Jesus liberates us from those things that we hold onto is to affirm the wonderful truth that we are all distinctly created and given gifts to participate in God's work in the world daily.

Jesus invites us to come and see what he's up to in the world. It's one of my favorite passages in the scripture and in which we hear the stories of Jesus Calling the disciples each one of them is a little bit different and it's not unusual that he called people to himself to it to shape their lives to follow after a teacher. You see Jewish rabbis were in the practice of doing that. At that time it was not unusual for a poor teacher to to have followers that tried to model their life after them. But what I find particularly unusual is the people that Jesus invites.

The people that he invites and then sends to share this good news of the Kingdom of God with all people.

Few see that they they weren't very qualified.

If it's up to me when I think about Jesus Calling people or finding the right person for a job to do I think well what are their qualifications. Let's take a look at their resume what are their work experience have they had to help them for this role or this or this opportunity.

And Jesus he doesn't do any of that. These people that were called to be his disciples they hadn't been theologically trained. Then the seminary. They may not have been in church for a long long time but but he said he wants you to come with me and you are going to be fishing for people.

This good news story of God's love has come nearer to you and I'm going to send you out to share it with others. So if you find yourself feeling unqualified. Or not ready.

Or unable to carry the light of Christ in you God says to us it doesn't matter. I'm not worried about your qualifications. You are invited. And you are sent to share this good news with other people.

To set down those things that bind you. The good news is that Jesus came to set us free so that we may fully live.

He says. Sit down. Those are things that you carry that burden you that weigh you down. And take my burden because it's light. And you'll find rest.

For your souls. And these words of Jesus have as much power today as when he first shared them on the shores there so long ago.

So our invitation is to G8 join at Jesus mission of liberation to allow ourselves to be set free to stop holding on so tight to those things. BLOCK Our Vision. To see new life springing up all around us.

To feel new life within our souls and to see the light of Christ and others and on the most darkest of days we can still find light in people and the world around us often in the most unexpected places and moments when we open our eyes and look for Jesus and we seek to understand his mission and join him where he is. We'll see places and people.

That are ready to bring forth new life. We might even see it in ourselves something new beginning that maybe hadn't been there in a long time. Maybe this spark of a flame that it's been growing dim in your own life perhaps. Has the opportunity to find new life and light again.

This season so let's make space let's wait together. Let's stop holding on tight.

And let the love of God fill our lives that we might share it with others.

Will you pray with me.

Because we're sorry for the times when we hold fast to things that bind us to things that block our vision. God we need your forgiveness so we ask for it. Forgive us oh God. Wash us clean and make us new.

Help us to make space in our lives again for you this season. Fanned the flame of your love and your good news within us that it might be a light for others. We might invite them as well to help see the light

that lives in them. Then together we might be a part of your transformation and the world. Bringing light and life to all people.

Oh God send us use us. We pray in Jesus name.