

I'm tired.

Amongst the things I have been called to do, I have moments where I think that God has a greater faith in my ability to do things than I do.

I make this confession to you today not so that you will pity me or think what a great person he is for doing all the things he does. No, I make that confession of being tired because I want to make a safe space for you to say the same thing.

This is a small, but mighty congregation, that does work in this community. It is a collection of people who support those they know and those they do not. It offers love to people who may have never felt it recently. And in doing that, we get tired.

The prophet Isaiah says what we have all thought at one time or another, "I have spent my strength on nothing and vanity...."

Feels that way sometimes, doesn't it?

We do this work, we put the effort forward to do the things that we believe God has called us to do and it can feel nothing ever seems to come of it.

Again, this isn't my complaint alone and, obviously, coming from Isaiah, it isn't new. You don't have to be a SAM, or Sunday School teacher, or Council Member to feel these things. How many times have we offered kindness to strangers and been met with rebuff. How many times have people been cruel in return for our love? What is the point of it all??????

The prophet cries out, Paul Cries out! Why does it matter? When the Broadway singer Billy Porter would complain to his mother as a child because the kids were picking on him, she would say "Well they crucified Jesus and that didn't stop him...."

Our human lives are at a constant battle with our spiritual lives because we want to see a return on our work but the work of loving our neighbor provides returns on God's timetable, not ours. If we are honest with ourselves, that's just frustrating. I spend my week trying to quantify Return on Investment, yet God doesn't seem too interested in showing me the ROI for the work I do. I mean, sure people are kind and polite and say "Your sermon was exactly what I needed to hear" (and usually when I'm sure it was a complete dog of a sermon) and that is meaningful, but are lives changed?

That's why we do this right? Each of us are called to be the hands, feet, body, and voice of Jesus in this world but why don't we see the impact? Surely if I saw the impact I would have a renewed energy to serve more. To preach every Sunday. To love those I don't like a little more genuinely. To give to those in need when confronted with the cruel realities of the world today.

If we are called to be a light of Christ to the world then surely we ought to see a benefit that is tangible and gives me some hope and purpose for the work each of us are putting forward.

I get how the prophet is feeling in Isaiah.

Then I hear one of the great movie lines of the 80's. I hear the line of Moonstruck when Cher slaps Nicholas Cage because he has professed his love for her while she's engaged to his brother... : "Snap out of it!"

We are called to be a light to the nations in our actions. Our emulation of Christ's love to others comes with the return on investment Christ preached. NONE!

The good Samaritan never got a thank you. The disciples called today were asked to leave their families and jobs, an action that no doubt caused great strife and argument. The rich man who refuses the call of Christ but "Jesus looked at him and loved him." And the criminal who died beside him who met Jesus in heaven but still suffered a cruel and painful death.

We are not called to share the love of God so that people will love us back. We are not called to serve as Gods hands and feet in this world so that people will thank us. We are called so that we can be a light. And as it is said, the light on the hill shows the way. But that light is never thanked. In fact, most of the time that light never knows who it has helped.

Yes, it is tiring and frustrating and irritating and annoying to be the person who does all of the work. We must make room for others to help and we must know that we aren't called to do this work for adulation and praise but to be a light to others. And we must be open to others being a light for us as well.

Serving Christ isn't a singles sport. It isn't a solo dance or song. Serving Christ is one of the greatest community activities we can participate in because it takes all

of us to be those hands and feet for God is everywhere and we are called to be everywhere with God.

When the disciples ask Jesus, "Where are you staying" the response is come and see. Not because Jesus is being coy, but because we must learn that wherever we are Jesus is there. In the most beautiful places and in the most frightening. In the welcoming places and in those where people don't care for us.

Yes we are tired. Whether you lead something in the congregation, or simply work on a daily basis to treat those you encounter with love when it is really hard to do so. Being the body of Christ in the world is exhausting, but so was being Christ in the world, yet that didn't stop him.

We must embrace the fact that the work we do, the love we share, the people that see their way through the light we let shine through, those things are making a better world whether we know the details or not. For as God said to the prophet "I will give you as a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Not for our joy, not for our satisfaction, or even for our understanding. But let us find rest knowing that the work we do, in whatever form it may be, makes a difference to someone. For we have heard the call to "Come and See" and that adventure will bring greater joy than we can ever conceive.

Amen.