

January 20th 2008 / Isaiah 49:1-7

A joke for the season...

Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men?

They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.

Speaking of direction today is the Annual mtg. Since I have come here to Urland I have tried to get my feet underneath me. I have tried to understand who and what Urland is. The church is the people. So you are Urland but who are you? What are you about? What have you been about in the past? How do I fit in as your pastor?

I have learned quite a bit though there is much more to understand.

I have been trying to find out what your talents, treasures and interests are. This I believed would help me to identify the direction God is leading us in. Again I have learned quite a bit but I haven't discerned what direction God is leading us. There are of course the basics, providing worship, teaching and growing in the faith, service, caring community, outreach, etc... And of course these things are no small thing, they are very important.

But what should be our emphasis? Maybe we are not ready for one yet, or maybe God has placed it before us and we can't see it yet.

Sandy and I have some friends who have a son who has been seriously dating this girl for quite a while. The son and girlfriend sent a post card to his parents. They appreciated the card but they didn't think much about it. Months past and our friends' daughter took the post card to school for a class project; upon inspection she realized that her brother and his girlfriend had highlighted different letters in the message that spelled out that they were engaged.

It was right in front of them but they didn't see it.

I'm not saying that God has sent us a hidden message however it could be right under our noses.

In studying today's message I think I have found what I believe is one of the ways God is leading us. Imagine God using scripture to help us understand what he has in mind. Who would have thought?

In our Old Testament lesson God tells the prophet Isaiah that he knows him, he knew him from before he was born. And that's because God made him and gave him the gifts and abilities to be his prophet. As a prophet it was Isaiah's job to bring back the tribes of Jacob and gather the tribes of Israel. That is to bring the Jewish people back to God.

But now God is going to a new thing. He tells Isaiah in verse 49:6 *"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

It is no longer his job to be God's voice, a prophet to his own people. That is too light a thing God says. That's too easy, that's not enough. God says, I don't want to limit my salvation to just the children of Abraham. I want it to reach to the end of the earth.

God knows us. God knew Urland from before it was established, he knew us before we were born in our mother's womb, because he made us, established Urland.

Could it be that God doesn't want us to just take care of our own? Sure we have a responsibility to our own, to the people of Urland especially those in need. But could it be that God is saying to us today, that's too light a thing.

Could he be saying that's too easy, that's not enough. I don't want to limit my salvation to just the children of Urland. I want it to reach the end of the earth.

What does it say about Urland, our direction, our mission? Think about it, talk about it pray about it. I'm going to.