

The induction of Miranda Sutherland Christ Church Hope

*John 14: 11-15*

This is a joyous occasion. There are many smiling faces gathered here this evening. Smiling faces that have been waiting a long time for this moment to arrive.

Induction services always remind me of wedding services. Don't panic Miranda, I am not thinking of the line in the wedding service "till death do us part", although some of those smiling faces out there might be thinking that would be great. No, it is the "whom God has brought together" proclamation I am thinking of. At a wedding and at an induction service we arrive at a place where we say God has brought us to this place. In both cases, with a wedding and with an induction service everyone has been praying and working to get to this place. Often then it feels like we have arrived at our destination. But the place we have arrived is actually the starting line not the destination. At a wedding the two people emotionally melting in each other's eye's are usually just too much in "ga ga land" to entertain the reality that they have actually just arrived at the starting line where the hard work, the life changing work begins. But everybody watching them knows they will eventually come out of their trance and wake up to that reality.

This evening we gather together to make the proclamation that God has brought us to this place and that this place is a joyous place of new life and loving relationships, this place is an answer to prayer. There might be a few of you thinking yes Miranda is God's answer to our prayer. Let me relieve Miranda's anxiety over such a thought and burst your bubble and up your anxiety. This gathering, this worship, is actually the answer to your prayers. It is also the starting place, the starting place of going out into the world to share all that God has done for us, so that God will be glorified. We are celebrating the work of God. We do

that together, everyone gathered here has a role to play revealing the glory of God in Christ. If you are here God wants to have a word with you, God has a job for you. Not just Miranda. That is so exciting, and that is so frightening.

The gospel passage that was chosen for our worship this evening is a portion of a larger passage where Jesus is preparing his disciples to go into the world. To go into the world as his representatives to share the good news of what God has done in Christ for us so that God will be glorified. Jesus is telling his disciples that he will leave them with gifts for this challenging work that he is sending them to do, that he is sending this community to do, that he is sending all of us who are his followers to do. The gift that is presented in the passage we just had is the gift of prayer. That might seem pretty straight forward. After all isn't prayer just talking to God. Yes it is but what Jesus leaves us with concerning prayer is something that is both challenging and encouraging. It is essential that we see the gift Christ imparts to us if we are to truly be the people whom God has brought together and sent out into the world.

The passage sets a very clear foundation but also has an astounding call upon our lives. Jesus says believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, and from that point of belief you will do greater things, you will bring about greater transformation of the world, because of the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. Prayer is not a recital of our desires, or our needs, or our bucket list. We pray to enter into the reality that God is glorified in Christ. We pray "so that the Father may be glorified in the Son".

If we are to be nurtured, if we are to be strengthened as God's people with this gift of prayer that Jesus leaves with us, and invites us into, then we need to consider

what the purpose of prayer is. Is the purpose of prayer to get God to satisfy your immediate desires? We all have many desires, and needs that we work hard to satisfy. Are we simply being invited to include prayer as part of the satisfying of our desires. That applies to us individually and corporately as a church. Do we pray just to get the needs met? Or is the purpose of prayer to set our hearts on the things that will satisfy our desires ultimately? Only the glory of God will satisfy your desires ultimately. The honour and love we are all looking for we will only find in God. As Saint Augustine noted “God you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until we find ourselves in thee.”

When we only see God’s power then we go to God to get things. After all God is logically the greatest source of power. However, when you see God’s glory, then you go to God to get God. To see the glory of God is to see the beauty of God, the love of God, the grace of God. God is not simply the greatest source of power, God is life, God is ultimate over everything, including health, career, even a full church. The purpose of prayer is to fix your heart on where true joys are to be found. The glory of God revealed in Christ.

Saint Augustine wrote a letter once to a woman named Anicia Proba regarding prayer. She was a wealthy woman with a great deal of social status. He told her that before anyone prayed, before they asked for anything, they had to get one thing clear in their mind. They must count themselves as desolate. We must understand that all the health, all the wealth, all the approval, everything we long for or find desirable will never bring lasting happiness or satisfaction. What we are looking for we will only find in God. Augustine told her when we know we are desolate then we can begin to pray, and when we pray we should ask for a happy

and fulfilling life. Because at that point we will be asking for more of God in Christ not more of creation.

This community of Hope was built by pioneers seeking resources that they thought would bring them a happy life. Wealth, from the gold rush or from the other seemingly endless natural resources surrounding this community. Hence the name Hope. In the midst of all these people striving to gain the glitter the world offers a group of Christians came and planted a church, proclaiming we are made for much more than the glitter of the world, we have a hope that goes way beyond anything the world has to offer.

People that don't live here seem to think the glory days are long over. That there is not much hope in Hope. The gold rush is long over, the highways don't really lead here they just depart from here in different directions, Rambo left town and did not come back with his friends. The pioneer days are long gone. But you know none of that is true. The real pioneers, with the real treasure, and the lasting hope are still here. They are gathered in this place tonight to say we have good news to share. The good news we have to share is the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus says to us, "believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. We are not actually at a starting line, the sharing of the gospel is more like a relay race, there are fresh starts throughout the race. This is a fresh start but the focus of the race remains the same, the motivation of the race remains the same.

Let's us all be people of prayer, we are all in this race together. Let's us pray not to get things that give our hearts immediate satisfaction whether that be individual or corporate as a church community. Let us pray to get that which will satisfy our hearts ultimately. Let us pray that by God's grace the glory of God revealed in

Christ will become our treasure our passion. “That the Father may be glorified in the Son” as we are made more like Christ. Jesus said “we will do greater things because he is going to the Father”. That is such a short phrase that points us towards the glorious images throughout the book of Revelation of Jesus the lamb God at the centre of the throne in heaven “after this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Tonight we gather to celebrate this hope, this future of being people gathered from every nation knowing the ultimate treasure Christ the lamb of God. We gather here with the people of Hope in the founding parish of Christian witness on the mainland of BC, saying God has brought us together, people of different nations, language, tribes, to bear witness to the love of God in Christ. Lord Jesus may you help us to love one another as you have loved us that others may see our good works “that the Father may be glorified in the Son”.