**Third Sunday after Epiphany Lectionary 3, Year B January 24, 2021**

**INTRODUCTION**

*As we continue through the time after Epiphany, stories of the call to discipleship show us the implications of our baptismal calling to show Christ to the world. Jesus begins proclaiming the good news and calling people to repentance right after John the Baptist is arrested for preaching in a similar way. Knowing that John was later executed, we see at the very outset the cost of discipleship. Still, the two sets of brothers leave everything they have known and worked for all their lives to follow Jesus and fish for people.*

**PRAYER OF THE DAY** Almighty God, you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom and to teach with authority. Anoint us with the power of your Spirit, that we, too. May bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**PSALM 62**

For God alone my soul in silence waits; from him comes my salvation.

**He alone is my rock and my salvation,**

**my stronghold, so that I shall not be greatly shaken.**

How long will you assail me to crush me, all of you together,

as if you were a leaning fence, a toppling wall?

**They seek only to bring me down from my place of honor; lies are their chief delight.**

They bless with their lips, but in their hearts they curse.

**For God alone my soul in silence waits; truly, my hope is in him.**

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

**In God is my safety and my honor; God is my strong rock and my refuge.**

Put your trust in him always, O people, pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.

**Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath, even those of low estate cannot be trusted.**

On the scales they are lighter than a breath, all of them together.

**Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride;**

**though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.**

God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, that power belongs to God.

Steadfast love is yours, O Lord, for you repay everyone according to their deeds.

Lord God, in a constantly changing world we look to you as our rock of hope. Hear us as we pour out our hearts to you, and give us your grace and secure protection; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Third Sunday after Epiphany Lectionary 3, Year B January 24, 2021**

**FIRST READING: Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

*The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah’s dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question “On whom should God have mercy?”*

1The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” 3So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. 4Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.
  10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

**Background**

The story of Jonah and the whale too often gets stuck in the children’s Bible Story book and never escapes. Yes, it’s a cute children’s story, but Jonah also has a message adults need to hear. Some commentators classify Jonah as satire; others consider it a parable. In any case it’s not a factual account about a real person. Scholars generally date it to the post-exilic period – after 539 BCE. By the time it was written, both Ninevah (612 BCE) and Jerusalem (587 BCE) had been destroyed. But the theme of the book is not destruction, but rather divine mercy – *chesed.* Jewish readers are challenged to believe that God’s divine mercy extends not only or not exclusively to them, but even to the Ninevites – residing in what was the archetypal evil city for generations. And modern readers are also challenged to realize that humans cannot place limits on God’s *chesed* much as we may wish or try!

**Verse by Verse**

**1The word of the Lord***(YHWH)* **came to Jonah a second time,** *(Jonah and Nineveh get a second chance).***saying,  2“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city,** *(same description as 1:2)***and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”***(A Biblical prophet did not foretell the future, but acted as spokesperson for another. for God!)*

*Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city of Upper Mesopotamia, located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River and was the capital and largest city of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, as well as the largest city in the world for several decades. The Assyrians under* [*Neo-Assyrian*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Assyrian)*monarchs, [Tiglath-Pileser III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiglath-Pileser_III%22%20%5Co%20%22Tiglath-Pileser%20III) and [Shalmaneser V](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalmaneser_V%22%20%5Co%20%22Shalmaneser%20V) and later Assyrian rulers*[*Sargon II*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_II)*and his son and successor,*[*Sennacherib*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sennacherib)*, were responsible for finishing the twenty-year demise of Israel's northern ten-tribe kingdom, and deported its peoples and scattered them (the “Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel) across their empire.*

**3So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly** *(lelohim – God, but also “exceedingly!)*  **large city,** *(see note above)* **a three days’ walk across.***(Three days – three days in the belly of the great fish)*

**4Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days** *( Forty – significant in numerology and Hebrew lore; 40 days of rain; 40 days on Sinai; 40 years in the wilderness, etc.)* **more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”***(Heb. nehpaket – same verb used for destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah, but here in passive voice means turned around or transformed)*

**5And the people of Nineveh believed God** *(Heb. belohim)* **; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.** *(Sackcloth and ashes – signs of repentance and mourning – Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam3:31; Job 42:6; Dan. 9:3;*

*Jonah’s proclamation was astonishingly effective! Nineveh repented as Jonah in ch. 2 did not.*

 **10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.**

**Theology: metanoia – a change in one’s way of life, repentance, conversion. Perhaps this was not so much a matter of God changing God’s mind, but of God’s eternal response to people’s true-hearted repentance.**

**Third Sunday after Epiphany Lectionary 3, Year B January 24, 2021**

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

*Paul does not disapprove of marriage or other human social institutions. He does, however, want Christians to live in the present in fervent anticipation of God’s future, which even now has dawned through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

29Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

**Background**

The Christian congregation at Corinth was gathered by Paul (Acts 18:1-18). This letter is written in response to a letter (not surviving) from the congregation, asking about several disputes within the group. This pericope comes from a section (chapter 7) which begins, *Now, concerning the matters abut which you wrote: “It is well for a man not to touch a woman.” But because of cases of sexual immorality, it is well for each man to have his own wife and each woman her own husband.* The chapter goes on to deal with a variety of questions of marriage, divorce, celibacy, etc. Paul specifies whether some advice is his or it comes from the Lord (vv. 10, 12). Our pericope wraps up the discussion with the Parousia as the reason for it. Paul is not seeing it as imminent as he did in 1 Thessalonians, but still coming sooner than later.

**Verse by Verse**

**29Brothers and sisters, the appointed time** *(Gk. kairos – God’s time)*  **has grown short** *(Gk. synestalmenos – wrap up)***; from now on,** *(loipon – henceforth, finally)* **let even those who have wives be as though they had none,**

**30and those who mourn** *(Gk. klaiontes – mourn, weep, lament)* **as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice** *(Gk. chairontes – rejoice; same root as charis – grace)* **as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy** *(Gk. agorazontes – going to market)***as though they had no possessions,**

**31and those who deal with** *(Gk. chromenoi – make use of)* **the world** *(Gk. kosmon – created order)*  **as though they had no dealings** *(Gk. katachromenoi – overuse or misuse)* **with it. For the present form** *(Gk. schema – external condition, appearance)* **of this world is passing away.**

**Theology: Perhaps not so much the “present form of this world is passing away” but more truly how we, as Christ’s people, live in and have dealings with the world!**

**Third Sunday after Epiphany Lectionary 3, Year B January 24, 2021**

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:14-20**

*Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as “the gospel” or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.*

14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”
  16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Background**

Mark is dated the earliest of the canonical gospels – late 60’s AD (CE). Probably not written in Palestine, and assumes the listeners will not be familiar with Jewish customs, Palestinian geography and Aramaic terms. May have been written in Syria, Italy or elsewhere in the Roman Empire. This gospel begins with Jesus’ baptism and races along from one incident to another “immediately” *(Gk. euthys).*

**Verse by Verse**

**14Now after John was arrested,** *(Gk. paradothenai – handed over; delivered up)* **Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming** *(Gk. kerysson – proclaim, preach)* **the good news** *(Gk. euangelion – gospel)* **of God,** *Some**manuscripts add “tes basileias” – the kingdom before “God” – probably a scribal addition.*

*Jesus wasn’t in Galilee – he had gone to Judea be baptized by John from Galilee v. 9, then tempted in “the wilderness” v. 12. Usually referring to the Judean wilderness.*

*The people went out to John 1:5 – And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him. But Jesus comes to the people.*

**15and saying, “The time** *(Gk. kairos – God’s time)*  **is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;** *This was John’s call 1:4* **repent,** *(Gk. metanoeite)* **and believe in the good news.”**

 **16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon** *7 times in Mark, who never uses “Simon Peter”, but Petros 19 times, and mentions this disciple more, proportionately, than Matthew or Luke* **and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.** *And that’s what fishermen do – they fish!!*

**17And Jesus said to them, “Follow me** *(Gk. Deute opiso mou – (you) come after me – imperative)* **and I will make** *(Gk. poiso – make or cause)* **you fish for people.”***(Gk. anthropon – human beings)*

**18And immediately** *(Gk. euthys)* **they left** *(Gk. aphentes - leave, abandon – used 15 times in Mark)* **their nets and followed** *(Gk. ekolouthesan – follow, attend)* **him.**

*M. Eugene Borning in “Mark, A Commentary” describes this as Jesus’ first miracle – Jesus called, and the fishermen followed.*

**19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.**

**20Immediately** *(Gk. euthys – again!)* **he called** *(Gk. ekalesen – call, invite, summon)* **them; and they left** *(Gk. aphentes – as above - #2!)* **their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.**

**Theology: Although the first call is to repent and believe, we can’t stop there. Christ’s call is also a call to action. Not only to believe the good news, but to be and do the good news for others. What bait will we use?**

**Verse by Verse – from Epiphany 3, 2012**

**1:14 Now after John was arrested,** παραδθήναι- more correctly “handed over” or “delivered up” – usually in NT implying God’s will at work here (cf 9:31) (Borning, Taylor) 3rd meaning could translate “arrested” – as passing someone along in the judicial process.

 **Jesus came to Galilee,** he wasn’t there – he was at Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan where John had been baptizing; then he was in the wilderness. Jesus (and “the people”) went to John; Jesus goes to the people, beginning his ministry.

 **proclaiming** κηρύσσων**-** preaching/teaching (Mark makes no distinction) this is the defining activity; Jesus’ ministry is a ministry of the word (1:38,39; 2:2; 4:14; 8:32; 13:31) (Williamson) used also for John’s ministry – 1:4 “proclaiming a baptism of repentance”

 **the good news** εύαγγέλιον – good news, NT only of God’s message of salvation

 **of God** note: some manuscripts add τής βασιλείας before “of God”, but Taylor say this is best explained as a “scribal addition”.

**1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled,** Πεπλήρωται ό καιρός - again, not clock or calendar time

 **and the kingdom of God** τής βασιλείας – if implied above, openly declared here

 **has come near,** ήγγικεν – approach, draw near in time and/or in space.

 It has not completely arrived, and is not simply present, but neither is it merely future. Use of the perfect tense conveys the sense that something has already happened that has brought the kingdom effectively near – so near that it affects the present (Boring)

 **repent, and believe in the good news."** μετανοείτε – repent, change one’s mind, be converted πιστεύετε- believe (in), be convinced (of)

 the content of this message is indicative/imperative. Neither can stand alone. God’s act calls for response. The command to repent and believe rests on the preceding gracious act of God. (Borning)

The first incident in Jesus’ public ministry is this call to others to enter the kingdom he announced in the previous verse and to invite others, too. There is no solo salvation; no individualist reign or rule of God. (Williamson)

**1:16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon –**Σίμων 7 times in Mark, who never uses “Simon Peter”, but Πέτρος 19 times, and mentions this disciple more, proportionately, than Matthew or Luke (Taylor)

 **and his brother Andrew –** lit. the brother of Simon – awkward, to preserve Andrew’s identity when Simon is later nicknamed Peter? (Borning)

 **casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen**. άλιείς – they made their living catching fish – professionals

**1:17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me –** command - δευτε – come after, follow,

 **and I will make**  ποιήσω – cause, force, make someone to do

 This is something that Jesus will cause to happen in these men when they follow him. (Borning)

 **you**  (**to be -** γενεσθαι)  **fish(ermen)** άλιείς  **for people."** ανθρωπων – human beings

 Fishing in this sense is not bait dangling on a hook waiting for a fish to bite. It is strenuous, persistent work, involving long hours, often without success. It is throwing out the net again and again in hopes of a catch.

**1:18 And immediately –** ευθυς – straightway, following right after, next

 – Mark’s favorite term to move the action

 **they left** άφεντες - leave, abandon – used 15 times in Mark (Taylor)

 **their nets and followed him.**

Borning describes this as Jesus’ first miracle – Jesus calls, and the fishermen follow.

**1:19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.**

**1:20** **Immediately** ευθυς – again, Mark’s trademark!

 **he called** έκάλεσεν – summons (as to discipleship)

 **them; and they left –** άφεντες – here’s #2! **their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men,**

 **and followed him.**

 Borning calls this the paradigm of the gathering of the Christian community by the Call of God in Christ

 Williamson notes: in the remainder of Mark, the disciples will not fare very well. Seldom, if ever, will their performance match the brightness of this first response. Their failures tarnish the noun “disciple” in Mark, but the verb “to follow” is never impugned. The purpose of Mark’s Gospel is to make of its readers faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and the fundamental quality of faithful discipleship is to be found here: “Follow me.”

**Theology:** Jesus calls us! By thy mercies, Savior, make us hear thy call;

 Give our hearts to thine obedience, serve and love thee best of all.