

Lessons for The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 21, 2024

Psalm 62 ~ *David expressed his trust in God in the face of threats and called on his people to do the same.*

Jonah 3:1–5, 10 ~ *God's warning through Jonah to Nineveh brought them to repentance and back to God.*

1 Corinthians 7:29–31 (32–35) ~ *The urgency of God's kingdom message enlists us in dramatic response.*

Mark 1:14–20 ~ *The good news of God's kingdom present in Jesus compels us to follow Him in mission.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: It's All in the Timing.

The time is critical. Forty days is all the time God gave Nineveh; Jonah used up three of those in the belly of the fish! St. Paul declared that the time is short; this world is passing away. That should affect the way we live. Jesus proclaimed that the time of the Kingdom of God has come. Without delay he called disciples, and at once they followed him to carry the message of salvation to everyone in this fast-fading world.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Most gracious God, you are quick to show me your love and to call me to trust in your goodness. Make me quick to respond so that I may not lose out on one moment of your blessings nor find the time too short to share them with my friends. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: We may not jump ship the way Jonah did, to avoid confronting people who are living contrary to God, but we often avoid God's call to mission. God grant us the vision and the desire to carry His word joyfully and effectively to others.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, bless these gifts we bring to you;
Their use is fading fast!
Give us the will, and time, to do
The loving things that last. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: While Jesus' call is urgent and commands immediate response, we are often so involved in our daily business (or entangled in our nets!), that we do not break free and leave the things we have learned to trust in order to follow Jesus in complete commitment. Following Jesus is a matter of trust in his message of good news and responding with a life that flows from that trust (*"repent and believe the good news"*). The power of Jesus' creative Word makes us become (*"I will make you become fishers of men."*) people who share that good news which gathers God's people. God's commanding Word in Christ overcomes our dependence on the call to other masters.

Questions to Consider: Don't you think it is about time?

- Why did God bother to find another means to transport Jonah to Nineveh?
- When do you use your time most effectively to accomplish a task? . . . to live for God?
- What does it say about our "masters" if we respond to God's call with, "In a minute."
- What makes the message of God's kingdom "good news?"