

Come, Let's Journey Together, Living Life, Loving Jesus

Gospel of Mark 1: 14-20 NLT

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News.^[a] ¹⁵ "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

The First Disciples

¹⁶ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon^[b] and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁷ Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ¹⁸ And they left their nets at once and followed him.

¹⁹ A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. ²⁰ He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

Footnotes

- a. 1:14 Some manuscripts read *the Good News of the Kingdom of God*.
- b. 1:16 *Simon* is called "Peter" in 3:16 and thereafter.

So what is this news? It is, "*The kingdom of God has come near.*" Jesus doesn't say that the kingdom of God *is* near. That might suggest that God's reign is some spiritual reality next door that's always been available, one that people can enter at any time by meditation or some other spiritual exercise. Jesus says it has *come* near. God is bringing it. God has been doing that from the beginning, from when he called Abraham and Sarah to leave their native land.

The call...

So now, Jesus says, the reign of God is very near, and, like John, he calls people to be ready. They are to prepare for the kingdom. There are two parts to that preparation, parts that are familiar because together they summarize the Christian life.

First, "Repent." You may have been told before that the Greek word for "repent" means literally "change your mind." It goes deeper than just choosing something different to have for dinner or wearing a different shirt. It means change your attitude, change your way of thinking. Your thoughts haven't been centered on loving God and your neighbor, so change. Repent. And then "believe the good news." Believe that God will make the promise a reality and will bring you into the kingdom. Trust God.

Every Sunday... maybe every day... we pray "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer. Don't be disappointed if after praying that you see no big change in the world. When Luther explained the Lord's Prayer in his *Small Catechism* he said that God's kingdom comes to us "whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through the Holy Spirit's grace

we believe God's Holy Word, and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity." The reign of God will finally encompass all creation, but it becomes a reality for each one of us when we believe the gospel.

Jesus first proclaims the good news to everyone, but then he speaks with specific people. Walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he sees two fishermen, Simon... later to be called Peter... and his brother Andrew, and says to them, "Follow me." And they do. That's a radical step for them to take, suddenly to leave their jobs. Those jobs meant hard physical work from dawn to dusk out on the lake, but they put bread on the table. And now they drop their nets and follow a stranger.

More is involved in following Jesus than just walking along after him. "I will make you fish for people," he tells those first disciples. The call to discipleship is a privilege, but also a responsibility. Jesus is going to put them to work. Will they stay in their safe situations or get into dangerous work? It's the work of proclaiming the kingdom of God in places where that message provokes opposition. Those who proclaim the kingdom may get thrown into prison as John the Baptist was.

The call comes to each one of us every day. As those first disciples came to realize, it's a call to be reconciled with God, to be in tune with the creator of the world. And it's also a call to share the message of reconciliation with others. The call to "fish for people" is not limited to those who have special gifts to be missionaries, pastors or evangelists. It's a call for followers of Jesus, members of the Body of Christ, to be the instruments by which the reign of God and "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding," is made known in word and deed.

That is what we ask of God in the prayer of St. Francis that begins, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."

This January join us on Sunday morning at 10:45 am for Online Worship, through Zoom at Furley Church. We are located on the corner of 101st St. N. and North Greenwich Road!

Praying for this new year,
Pastor Kent