

Pastor Jon's January 24, 2021 Sermon

Text: Mark 1:14-20 and Jonah

“Fishing for People”

Today in the Gospel of Mark we get the calling of the first disciples.

After John the Baptist's arrest, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, saying, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Jesus is saying now is the time. The Kingdom of God is here. It is time to live into a new reality. Make the changes you need to make and put your trust in me. Surrender your whole life to me.

I taught a few weeks ago that to repent means to change your mind... to literally turn around... or do a 180. One way to describe it is to make a life change.

So what does this look like in our lessons for today. In our first lesson, Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh and tell the Ninevites to change their evil ways. The message was, in 40 days God will destroy the city unless they repent. Jonah had already made up his mind about the Ninevites thinking this will never work and ran as far away as possible from the call. Have you ever done this, made up your mind about someone thinking they will never change? Jonah ended up in the belly of a giant fish for three days, prayed to God and was spit out on the shore. He eventually heeded the call of God to go to Nineveh and shared the message, and much to Jonah's dismay, the people repented. As the people repented, God changed God's mind about destroying the Ninevites. In essence, God repented from the plan of destruction and offered grace.

In the calling of the fisherman in Mark, Jesus called two sets of fishing brothers... Simon and Andrew and the Zebedee's, James and John to help him with his ministry of r the good news.

Simon and Andrew were in the boat casting a net into the sea when Jesus called out, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus. Mark uses the word immediately often.

This is what Jesus' call to repentance looks like. You drop everything and head in a different direction. Every day is a call to repentance. We mess up every day. None of us can escape sin.

Jesus is calling these fisherman into something new... a break from the past. The kingdom has arrived in Jesus Christ and it is time to accept that things don't have to stay the way they are.

How many of you find yourself dwelling in the past? How many of you are not kind to yourself about your past?

How many of you are anxiously waiting for this pandemic to end so you can resume life as it was? I am afraid we are forever marked by this pandemic and there will be lasting changes.

What I hear in this text is that accepting the call to follow Jesus is a right now thing. It isn't a wait and we will see how things go. Or I need to do this first.

How do you think James and John's father, Zebedee, felt when their sons left him and the hired men holding the nets as they were mending them? Several people in our Bible study just could not wrap their heads around this idea of immediately leaving family and jobs behind.

I think the first disciple's following Jesus is a metaphor for our journey of faith. In the face of whatever the world throws at us, we are called to repent and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. The harsh reality of the pandemic is enough to get anyone down.

Why were these fisherman so willing to drop everything? What was going on in the Roman dominated world that made them so willing to drop their nets? What was it about following Jesus that was so compelling?

I know when I read this text for the first time in my 20's it captured my imagination. It made me ask the big questions like where am I going in life? What nets am I clinging to that I am afraid to leave behind?