

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 24, 2021

Year B RCL

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:6-14; Mark 1:14-20

“Repent, and believe in the good news.”

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Five times in this chapter from Mark we hear about the “news”; first the good news in verses 1, 14, and 15, and later the spreading of the news in verses 28 and 45. The gospel of Mark in this first chapter is explicit in showing that Jesus’ ministry is primary to announce the good news. Which ones? What exactly is the good news? The answer we receive from the Christian tradition is that good news and gospel is the same word that comes from the Greek translation of *evangelion*. So in announcing the good news, Jesus is announcing his own presence of liberation from sin and death. Jesus’ life among the fellow Israelites guarantees a new beginning in their relationship with God.

When the disciples of John the Baptist went to inquire about Jesus identity, they ask him, “Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”

Mt 11:4-5

The good news which is Jesus himself, brings peace to the brokenness and hostility of the world. Jesus’ good news is announced with the mystery of his own life through his passion and death. In reading the gospels, it is possible to discover that each encounter Jesus has with a person was a transformative experience for those he meets. It is the same still today, it is impossible to encounter Jesus and continue being the same person.

The narrative of the gospel of Mark that we heard today mentions, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.” The time (Kairos) is always under God’s control, only God knows and has decided over it even if we humans have the temptation of controlling our time and wanting to know about our future.

For those who were expecting the messiah and seeking change, the gospel offers a promising present and future, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom

of God has come near.” All the prophecies and wait are over. The time is now, everyone who listen to Jesus’ proclamation is invited to experience the fulfilment of God’s promise and the closeness of God. The Immanuel (God with us) who was born in a manger, is here for all who believe and trust in him. This message of liberation also embraces the men and women of each age including you and me who read the gospel. They receive the same benefits as those who were listening to Jesus’ proclamation of the good news. Time, from God’s perspective, is always perfection and complete. The fact that Jesus mentioned the fulfilment of time and the closeness of God’s Kingdom proves that the salvation of the humanity is God’s unique invitation offered for all. The Kingdom of God defines and give meaning to the time. The Kingdom of God, which ultimately is the person of God, is the first principle and goal of salvation; and the time is subordinate and under the Kingdom’s authority and power.

The revelation of God’s Kingdom requires new insights from everything from the past and Jesus knows this. For this reason, the proclamation of Jesus, after mentioning the fulfillment of time and the nearness of the Kingdom, call people to “repent, and believe in the good news.” It is not enough to be close to the gold mine if you never dig to find it, or to receive the gift if you never

unwrapped it. It is the same with the good news of salvation, the only way to access them is through the acceptance of God's doing in personal and intimal manner and this requires our repentance and to believe namely in faith.

The gospel today shows how much faith the four fishermen had. The repentance for these new disciples of Jesus is expressed in their capacity to follow him. In receiving Jesus imperative command of "follow me and I will make you fish for people," the two pair of brothers "Simon and his brother Andrew" and "James son of Zebedee and his brother John" left their nets, their affections (father Zebedee), their boats and everything they knew to embark in the unknown adventure of the good news.

These fishermen by the end of today's gospel are followers of Jesus that eventually learned how to fish for people. They struggled but grew in their faith and their capacity to trust Jesus more each day. They understood that following Jesus the Good News requires to die to self to allow God and his Kingdom to be first. Centuries later something similar happened to Francis of Assis which he expressed really well in his prayer for peace, "It is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

To have repentance and believe as in faith is never an isolated experience in the journey of the cross. It is necessary for all followers of Jesus to repent and

believe each day to recognize the good news. Jonah from the first lesson, the fishermen of people from Mark's gospel, and the apostles Peter and Paul which we remember specifically in this week of prayer for Christian Unity, all show in their lives and testimony, that the good news God offers in Jesus are more than enough to bring the happiness and completeness the people of each age desire and need. As you continue in your journey of faith, hear again Jesus' proclamation: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near." Not matter the circumstances, obstacles or doubts you may have in your life right now, with steadfast faith and confidence, remember that God's Kingdom is always close to you. Amen.