



Third Sunday after the Epiphany Year B January 25 2015

The call to follow Christ continues this week, with Mark's Gospel narrating the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John. But, along with this call comes a challenge to trust in God and not in the temporary, unreliable things of this world. In truth, unless we learn to trust God, and release our desire to find security, wealth and satisfaction in material things, we will never really know God's Reign, and we will never be able to bring God's life to others.

May we see the glory of the Christ who revealed God's Reign, and may we seek to reflect that glory to our world this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Jonah 3 : 1-5,

The message today of this reading and the Gospel is the call to repent. In the story of Jonah, God called him to warn the people of Nineveh of imminent punishment for their sin, and when they repented they were forgiven.

The Psalm - Psalm 62: 5-12

An exhortation to wait on God and trust God as our refuge and salvation. Wealth, whether stolen, extorted or simply increasing, does not provide the security that God does, for God, in God's mercy, gives rewards.

1 Corinthians 7 : 29-31

We continue reading from this letter, having heard last Sunday Paul's teaching about our bodies, which are holy because they are God's. Now he recommends a degree of detachment from too much worldly care and responsibility, with the sense that the end of all things is near.

Mark 1 : 14-20 According to Mark, Jesus's public ministry began by echoing John the Baptist, calling everyone to repent and recognise the coming of the kingdom. Some men immediately answered his call.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Jonah%203:%201-5,10%0Acw%20Psalm%2062:%205-12%0A1%20Corinthians%207:%2029-31%0AMark%201:%2014-20

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,
Mercifully look upon our infirmities,
and in all our dangers and necessities
stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
Renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Almighty Compassionate God,
You care for all your peoples, whether they are here around us or in far off places, you care enough to call people to bring the good news to them.

You care about our country during these tough economic times.

You care about countries like Gaza, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan who have deeper problems and needs than we do.

You care about those who are sick, in pain, in the hospital, home bound and in nursing homes, your compassion extends to them.

You care about those who carry heavy burdens, broken hearts, grieving, lonely and anxious, your compassion extends to them as well.

You care for the great number of people losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing their bank accounts as well as those who have had none of those for a long time.

You care for those of us who answered your call to preach your word, teach your word, Pastor your flock, and lead in songs of praise, your compassion extends to us as well.

Lord we thank you for your compassion, your care, your mercy and the good news of your son Jesus Christ. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

The kingdom of God is near at hand. Let us earnestly call on God for the needs, concerns, and hopes of all peoples.

Deacon or other leader

For the church of Jesus Christ in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters, deacons, and all who minister in Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy gathering and for all who are called to follow Jesus.

Lord, have mercy.

For this country, for all nations and their leaders, and for those who guard the peace.

Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

God of infinite mercy, hear the prayers of your people and stir up our souls with longing to embrace your gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Almighty Father,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
May your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped,
and obeyed to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS

Perfect Light of revelation,
as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate,
so shine in us and through us,
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

O God,
you spoke your word
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.
Fill all creation with that word again,
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,
we may become one living body,
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

To God who welcomes all in love,
let us pray for the good of the church
and the concerns of those in need...
...God of every land and nation,
you have created all people

and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,
and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,
let us lift our hearts in faith
to the one who hears all prayers
and holds close all those in need...
...Holy God, you gather the whole universe
into your radiant presence
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.
Bring healing to all wounds,
make whole all that is broken,
speak truth to all illusion,
and shed light in every darkness,
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

God of Blazing light,
through the power of the cross you shattered our darkness,
scattering the fears that bind us
and setting us free to live as your children.
Give us courage and conviction
that we may joyfully turn and follow you
into new adventures of faithful service,
led by the light that shines
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit
so that we may become a habitation for
your presence among us.
Grant us courage and strength to be a church that
welcomes and desires only to serve and
share you with others.
Make us such a holy place and a holy people that we
become a beacon of hope for the lost, the
unloved and the seekers.
Pour your supernatural grace into every part of our
corporate life so that we bend to your will
and live for your glory. We ask this in the
name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

In you, O Lord our God,
we find our joy,
for through your law and your prophets
you formed a people in mercy and freedom,
in justice and righteousness.
Pour your Spirit on us today,
that we who are Christ's body
may bear the good news of your ancient promises
to all who seek you. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Jonah 3:1-5, 10:

This is the only week Jonah appears in the lectionary, so consider reading other sections, or expanding your focus, so that people get the full story.

The interesting thing about this story, not included in today's text, is that Jonah wasn't happy that God was sparing the people. In fact, Jonah knew that God was likely to be merciful and spare the people, and this is what most upsets Jonah. Are you ever upset at the liberal way God shares grace with others? Why do you think this is? Sometimes I think we act as if God's grace will run out for us if God gives too much to others!

How would you feel as a resident of Nineveh? Are you open to others telling you that you are not following God? Generally, we don't like people telling us what to do, or telling us what we're doing wrong. But the residents of Nineveh get their acts together, and repent. And God shows mercy. (I think God can show us mercy, obviously, even when we are undeserving. But wouldn't it be nice to do our part for once?)

Psalm 62:5-12:

"For God alone my soul waits in silence" - silence is such a rare thing these days. As I type, there is the whirr of my laptop, and my TV in the background. This is typical. Silence is rare. Will you find silent time for God?

"My hope is from [God.]" What's your hope? Where is it from?

The psalmist urges us to put our trust in God - rank in the world is "but a breath" or "a delusion" - only God has real power.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31:

Paul clearly is anticipating a swift return of Jesus Christ to earth. But even though things didn't happen the way Paul was expecting, I think his words are still meaningful.

We're to live, in a sense, in the moment. I don't think this means to be irresponsible, or to not make plans, or to not take care of others, of obligations. But to live with an understanding that we have a different main purpose - to live as God calls us - and so to not let what is not important tie us down.

Mark 1:14-20:

What's the good news? Sometimes, I think we believe the good news is that "Jesus Christ died for our sins." But according to Mark, Jesus himself was a proclaimer of the good news, and it was this: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe . . ."

"Follow me and I will make you fish for people." Are you fishing for people? What do you think Jesus meant by this? Evangelism? How? What kind?

Important: Don't forget that *before* you fish for other people, you should *first* be following Jesus. Any other way we try it is following only our *own* agenda.

Immediately! This is one of my favorite words in scriptures. We like things to happen in our lives in a convenient and fast way when it is for our own benefit - but how often do we respond to God *immediately*?

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The clear call of this week's Lectionary is to get our priorities right. The way this is applied to our lives is twofold. In the first instance, there is the call not to depend on the things of this world, not to place our hope or trust in things that cannot save us, and that will ultimately pass away. Both Psalm 62 and the letter to the Corinthians stress this truth and call us to trust only in God. Then, there is the call to commit ourselves to God's purposes and invite others into God's grace and life. The story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet, shows how committed God is to this, and the calling of the first disciples to be "fishers of people" reveals how Jesus' mission was to lead people into God's Reign and the lasting life that it offers. It makes sense, of course, that when

we have experienced the life of God, and learned to trust in God rather than in temporary, unsatisfying things, that we should desire to share the joy that we have found. So, as we begin to understand this Christ, and as we recognise God's glory revealed in him, we are invited both to receive God's life and presence, and to be those who reflect Christ's presence and glory to others.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: There is little mystery to this week's theme and how it applies to our world. The call to shift our allegiance from "things" to God may sound naïve, but it is actually exactly what we need to address the big challenges we face in our world. It is our desire to accumulate wealth, to have enough weaponry and to satisfy every appetite that has left us in the crises we now experience. But, when we can trust in God and God's Reign to be our security, our sufficiency and our best life, we lose the need to grasp what we can and fight against others to protect ourselves. This is the repentance that Jesus calls for, and the Reign of God is the new way of being that can lead us to life and security and enough for all. In God's Reign we no longer need violence, war or terrorism, or weapons to keep us safe, because we know both that they are unable to protect us, and that the only truly secure life is that hidden in God. In God's Reign we do not need to prioritise the accumulation of wealth above all else, because we know that money does not provide us with the things that make life really full and meaningful, and we know that there is enough for everyone, if it shared well. In God's Reign we do not have to marginalise or exclude others in order to have a strong national or personal identity. Rather, our identity is given to us by God's adoption of us as children, and we learn that all people are our brothers and sisters. And so, one of the most powerful, healing and just things we can do, is to recognise the life, the security and the sufficiency we have in Christ – the way God's grace and love are revealed in Christ – and to share our trust, our simplicity, our inclusivity and our generosity with others. In this way, we become those who see God's glory revealed in Christ, and who reflect it to others – while trusting that it is a glory that truly can heal our world.

LOCAL APPLICATION: It is unfortunate that Jesus' call for us to be "fishers of people" has so often been interpreted to mean coercing others into our way of thinking, believing or worshipping. Evangelism has been about trying to change others to be like us, rather than inviting them to follow Jesus. We have made Jesus' message of God's Reign about the Church, and about a specific religion, more than about Christ. In this way, rather than allow God's glory, revealed in Christ, to shine, we have obscured it and distorted it and hidden it from others. In many ways we have become like Jonah, who at first did not want to prophesy to Nineveh because he didn't want the people to

repent and be saved. He wanted to be right, more than he wanted God's grace to be seen. But, the downside for us in this equation is that we have actually stopped trusting in God, and have started trusting instead in our wealth, our religions, our doctrines, our strength, our military or even our nation. If we can release this, and allow the radical – even offensive – inclusivity and grace of God's Reign to guide us, we will discover, like Jonah that we cannot control God's grace and we cannot act as gatekeepers of God's salvation. Rather, we will have to learn to trust that not only is there enough grace and life and support for others, but there is also enough for us, if we embrace and welcome others. When this truth sinks into our hearts, becoming "fishers of people" stops being about "our" religion, or "our" truth, or "our" country or "our" blessing. Rather it becomes about allowing the light of God's glory – God's presence and purpose – to shine and to attract others into an inclusive, simple and trusting life that welcomes all and shares with all and loves all. The question is whether we have the courage and the humility to stop trying to control God and to allow God's glory to be our guide, rather than our own fear, self-interest and pride. It's a challenging, but liberating message, if we will but hear it again.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Day 1 - Prodigious Love. A wonderful modern re-telling of the parable of the two sons - The conclusion is: "I now see that neither of us understood my father and his love. I had thought that I could destroy it, and my brother had thought that he needed to earn it.

"Why do I stand before you and tell this story? Maybe there is someone here who is now experiencing his or her own sleepless and desperate nights. Maybe there is someone here who needs to come back to himself, to herself. Maybe there is someone here who needs to come back to God. If so, don't hesitate. God not only waits for you, he sent his only son on a rescue mission from heaven to find you. If my wonderful, though human and fallible, father could love so freely and completely, just think how prodigal God's love and mercy must be.

"And then maybe there is someone here who is like my brother. He was a good fellow, he meant well, but his feeling that the weight of the world was on his shoulders had pinched his heart. Do any of you feel that way? It is not a good way to feel. If anyone here identifies with him, would you please believe that you are loved and that all that the father has is already yours?

"My father threw that feast for me when I returned home. That is what parents do. Today God, our father, throws this feast. The feast of Jesus. Please don't

come thinking that you need to earn your way here either with your remorse or your righteousness. Just come. Come and acknowledge your hunger for God. Come and be filled. There is enough for all. There is room for all. The father delights to see his children feast together.” Good concluding prayer.

http://day1.org/974-prodigious_love

America 1 - John R Donahue gives an excellent short overview of how the bible readings are changing at this time, and the reasons for the same. You may not preach a sermon on this material - but it will refresh your overview and appreciation of the scriptures which are shaping our worship and journey through the Christian Year.

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=510

America 2 - The fish story that tops all. “God seems to choose the most unlikely people to proclaim the good news: a prophet who tried to escape his call and was carried to his ministry in the belly of a large fish; simple fishermen who knew a lot about bait and nets, but little about preaching; a tent-maker who became a disciple when the power of God knocked him down. And today? An elementary school teacher, a stockbroker, a waiter, a doctor, a clerk, a firefighter and so on...”

Dianne Bergant give the key messages of today’s reading with a freshness and a starkness.

<http://americamagazine.org/node/134267>

CHILDREN

Talks2children

There are three talks for Epiphany here -

<http://talks2children.wordpress.com/category/epiphany/>

“Freeze!” (Scripture Reference; Mark 1: 4-20)

First Thoughts: In this next story of Jesus inviting disciples, we’re going to focus on Jesus’ invitation to repentance - to stop, think, and turn around. As preparation for this lesson, I invite you to look back at your life, particularly focusing on those times when you made a shift in your path. Perhaps you changed careers, or ended an unhealthy relationship, or just decided it was time for a fresh start and moved to another place. What was it that caused you to change direction? Do you feel the change benefited you? How does it feel to change direction, and to begin something new? [To access full lesson, click here!](#)

"Time Out" (Scripture Reference: Jonah 3: 1-5)

<http://annashosannas.net/Children%5C%27s-Lessons-Epiphany-B.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[There's A Wideness In God's Mercy](#)

[Just As I Am](#)

[To God Be The Glory](#)

[Depth Of Mercy](#)

[Ye Servants Of God, Your Master Proclaim](#)

[O Jesus, I Have Promised](#)

[You Are](#)

[Pass It On](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Living For Your Glory](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[May The Words Of My Mouth](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[All I Have](#)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title