

**Worship Service for January 24<sup>th</sup>: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany**

- **Old Testament:** Jonah 3:1-10
- **New Testament:** Mark 1:14-20
- **Psalms:** Psalm 62:5-12

**Announcements:**

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Bible study will resume on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying the book of James and also discussing our Sunday sermon passages and how we can apply it to our daily lives. Therefore, we will begin with James 1.

**Sermon: A New Narrative!**

Last week, he heard how Jesus started his ministry by calling disciples to work with him, inviting them to follow him. In our passage today, Mark has chosen to give us a little more detail about the lives of the people Jesus called last week. We are informed that Andrew and Simon were fishermen, and we are introduced to their neighbours James and John who were also fishermen and also called to follow Jesus Christ. This time around Jesus' invitation was more detailed. "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people."

This week we get to see that these people were not idle people. They had a profession, a business, a career. They were fishermen. John and James, we are told, "left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Jesus." Meaning that these men had been running a family business. A business that had surely been passed on from generation to generation. In that country and culture, as in many countries and cultures to this day, it was common for family businesses to be passed on from generation to generation for as long as centuries.

A family generational business is safe and secure because people are aware of what they are doing and some of them might have started doing it from childhood. Jesus' invitation was breaking a cycle and introducing a new order, a new narrative. "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." He was calling them to an unknown world. All the information they had was that they would be fishing people and I can bet they didn't know what that would look like.

I am sure that a few of us here can identify either with James and John or with their father Zebedee. Some of us are even fishermen like these men and our businesses had been passed on from generation to generation, so we know what it means for one to break that cycle and choose to do their own thing.

Jesus Christ gave us an invitation last week to follow him and I am sure some of us are wondering what that means. We are probably saying, "Lord I truly want to follow you but what does that mean? How will it look like? Be encouraged! You are not alone. Andrew, Simon, James and John had no idea either, but it didn't stop them from following the Master. We are told that they immediately left their father and what they were doing and followed Jesus. That right there is called trust. Let us trust Jesus and believe that he will not frustrate or mislead us.

Jesus is calling us to leave everything we know, everything we are used to, all our securities and follow him. Abraham experienced such a call in his lifetime. He was asked to leave his country and his father's house to a land that God will eventually show him. He left without knowing precisely where that land was, but he left all the same. Mark is telling us today and the Spirit of God more so, that in this year 2021, God is calling us to leave behind the old businesses that we were engaged in; old businesses of unnecessary criticism and judgment, of fear and anxiety, of lack of faith and lukewarmness, of not caring and not loving, of bullying and aggressiveness. He is calling us to leave behind all the preconceptions we had, the mindset of "this is how we have always done it."

Let us leave all that and follow Jesus into the new pathway. The pathway of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in new tongues, the pathway of revival and kingdom engagements, the pathway of love for God and for all humans, the pathway of passion and zeal for the things of God. Jesus Christ is calling us to follow him into the pathway of fishing people and bringing them the good news. The good news for them to repent and be saved for the kingdom of God is near.

And if at all we were thinking that people are not interested and are not ready to hear the good news let us look at the story of Jonah. God sent Jonah to Nineveh, a great city whose inhabitants were living in so much sin that the anger of God was about to come on them. Jonah warned them that they had forty days to change their ways or else God's anger will come upon them and they will be destroyed.

### **What was their response?**

We are told that “the King of Nineveh rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.” He did not end there; he made a proclamation to Nineveh and called on the people to pause everything that they were doing, to stop eating and drinking and go into fasting putting on sackcloth as a sign of repentance. They were also commanded to give up their old ways of evil and violence in the hope that God will relent from His fierce anger and not bring destruction on them.

God also responded to their repentance by relenting His judgment on the people and forgiving their sins. The Bible tells us that the harvest is plenty, and the labourers are few. People are willing and ready; they are hungry and thirsty but there is no one to bring them the good news.

**What will be your decision today?** The Holy Spirit is advising us through our passage in Mark today, to leave everything at once and follow Jesus. He is inviting us to become fishers of people. May God grant us the grace to trust Him enough to answer the call immediately. Amen.

### **Prayer**

Our gracious, eternal God, we thank you that Jesus’ call to his disciples came in such an uneventful way. Contrary to the wisdom of the world he did not start with the privileged and the wealthy and the powerful. He did not begin with those who had little need and little desire for change. He began with some very simple folk. He began with some fishermen.

We pray that his call, “Come, follow me,” might again reverberate through our souls today. May we hear again the challenge to be your disciples. May we hear again the message of the one who brings good news. May we hear again the invitation to come to you, “all you who are weary and heavy laden.” May we hear again eternal words of hope which tell us that however dark the world becomes the darkness cannot ever overcome the radiant light of this holy one, Jesus. May we hear again those simple words: “Come, follow me,” and may we come, just as we are, and know again the depth of your grace and love for us.

Give us the power to bring change and transformation to the peoples of the world as did those early fishermen. Give us the power to provide the same kind of hope

for the world-weary as they brought to theirs. Give us the vision of a world transformed.

We pray for those whose health is a constant and major concern. Be especially with those whose health is compromised so much that they have no hope of ever feeling totally well again. For those we ask that you give courage for the frustrating obstacles of life.

Gracious Christ, you came to the fishermen when the prophet John was taken away. Come to us now, as we fear losses of our own. Grant us courage to cast aside the nets that bind us, to follow you into true freedom and newness of life. Help us to be faithful disciples, that we might inspire others to follow in your ways.

Lord Jesus, you called ordinary men and women to follow you and join in the work of God's reign on earth. We offer you our gifts to share in the work you began through them. So bless our gifts and continue to work through us, that the world may know your love and grace is still active among us all.

We dare to ask all this because we trust in the name of Jesus, your Son, who taught all his followers to pray:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit our Comforter be with you all.