

Scripture Study

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Jonah 3:1-5

(Ps 25:4-9)

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

Overview of the Gospel:

- The events of this Sunday's Gospel according to Mark occur just after Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, and his temptation by the devil in the wilderness (Mark 1:9-13). It also occurs after the initial calling of the first four disciples we heard about last Sunday.
- Jesus begins his preaching after the arrest of John, who is considered to be the last of the Old Testament prophets. The time for prophecy is through: Jesus picks up John's call to repent (verses 1-8, 15) and announces the kingdom of God (verses 14-15).
- Jesus calls for repentance before anything else—before knowledge, good works, even before faith. The word "repent" literally means to "change your mind"; to go from rebellion against God to obedience (Jeremiah 3:22; Isaiah 30:15; Hosea 14:2; Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:12).
- The call to repentance comes from the mercy of God, and the response is conversion, both initially and throughout the life of a disciple of Jesus.
- St. Mark tells us that Simon Peter, James, John and Andrew respond immediately to the call by Jesus (verses 18, 20). The first three of this four will later form the "inner circle" of Jesus' Apostles, being present with him at key points in his ministry (Mark 6:35-43; Matthew 17:1, 26:37). Andrew will play a key part in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (John 6:8) which will lead to Jesus' great Bread of Life discourse.

Questions:

- What was Jesus' invitation to these fishermen? What seems unusual about their response? What prior knowledge of Jesus do you think they had (Mark 1:14-15; John 1:35-42)? What might the elder Zebedee felt (verse 22)? How significant is the fact that Jesus' very first disciples were fishermen (verses 16-20; Jeremiah 16:14-16)?
- When and why was John the Baptist arrested (verse 14; Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-15)? What significance does his arrest have for the beginning of Jesus' ministry of preaching (verse 15)? How does it foreshadow the last days of his ministry?
- What is it about Jesus that makes you want to follow him?
- Different types of fishermen need different skills: sailing, casting, mending nets, reading charts, etc. If Jesus asked you to be a "fisher of men", what skills could you bring?
- Spiritually, are you still sitting on the shore mending nets? Leaving the boat? Following right after Jesus? Feeling left behind?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 541, 1422-1424, 1427-1429, 787

Closing prayer

Having before you many examples of sinners who repented and were saved, be you also earnest in confessing to the Lord, that you may receive pardon for past sins, be made worthy of the heavenly gift, and inherit the kingdom of heaven with all the saints. -St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+ A.D. 386)

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"The kingdom of God is at hand"

Scripture: *Mark 1:14-20*

Meditation: What is the *gospel of God* which Jesus came to preach? The word "gospel" literally means "good news". When a king had good news to deliver to his subjects he sent messengers or heralds throughout the land to make a public announcement – such as the birth of a new king or the defeat of an invading army or occupied force. God sent his prophets to announce the coming of God's anointed King and Messiah. After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan and anointed by the Spirit he begins his ministry of preaching the gospel – the good news that the kingdom of God was now at hand for all who were ready to receive it.

What is the kingdom of God? The word "kingdom" means something more than a territory or an area of land. It literally means "sovereignty" or "reign" and the power to "rule" and exercise authority. The prophets announced that God would establish a kingdom not just for one nation or people but for the whole world. The scriptures tell us that God's throne is in heaven and his rule is over all (Psalm 103:19). His kingdom is bigger and more powerful than anything we can imagine because it is universal and everlasting (Daniel 4:3). His kingdom is full of glory, power, and splendor (Psalm 145:11-13). In the Book of Daniel we are told that this kingdom is given to the *Son of Man* and to the saints (Daniel 7:14,18,22,27). The *Son of Man* is a Messianic title for God's anointed King. The New Testament word for "Messiah" is "Christ" which literally means the "Anointed One" or the "Anointed King". God sent us his Son not to establish an earthly kingdom but to bring us into his heavenly kingdom – a kingdom ruled by truth, justice, peace, and holiness. The kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' mission. It's the core of his gospel message.

How do we enter the kingdom of God? In announcing the good news, Jesus gave two explicit things each of us must do to in order to receive the



kingdom of God: *repent and believe*. When we submit to Christ's rule in our lives and believe the gospel message the Lord Jesus gives us the grace and power to live a new way of life as citizens of his kingdom. He gives us grace to renounce the kingdom of darkness ruled by sin and Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44) and the ruler of this present world (John 12:31). That is why repentance is the first step. Repentance means to change – to change my way of thinking, my attitude, disposition, and life choices so that Christ can be the Lord and Master of my heart rather than sin, selfishness, and greed. If we are only sorry for the consequences of our sins, we will very likely keep repeating the sin that is mastering us. True repentance requires a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17) and sorrow for sin and a firm resolution to avoid it in the future. The Lord Jesus gives us grace to see sin for what it really is – a rejection of his love and wisdom for our lives and a refusal to do what is good and in accord with his will. His grace brings pardon and help for turning away from everything that would keep us from his love and truth. To believe is to take Jesus at his word and to recognize that God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to free us from bondage to sin and harmful desires. God made the supreme sacrifice of his Son on the cross to bring us back to a relationship of peace and friendship with himself. He is our Father and he wants us to live as his sons and daughters. God loved us first and he invites us in love to surrender our lives to him. Do you believe that the gospel – the good news of Jesus – has power to free you from bondage to sin and fear?

When Jesus preached the gospel message he called others to follow as his disciples and he gave them a mission – "to catch people for the kingdom of God". What kind of disciples did he choose? Smelly fishermen! In the choice of the first apostles we see a characteristic feature of Jesus' work: he chose very ordinary people. They were non-professionals, had no wealth or position. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special education, and no social advantages. Jesus wanted ordinary people who could take an assignment and do it extraordinarily well. He chose these individuals, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power. When the Lord calls us to serve, we must not think we have nothing to offer. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom. Do you believe that God wants to work through and in you for his glory?

Jesus speaks the same message to us today: we will "catch people" for the kingdom of God if we allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine through us. God wants others to see the light of Christ in us in the way we live, speak, and witness the joy of the gospel. Paul the Apostles says, *But thanks be to God, who in Christ Jesus always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing* (2 Corinthians 2:15). Do you witness to those around you the joy of the gospel and do you pray for your neighbors, co-workers, and relatives that they may come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and grow in the knowledge of his love?

"Lord Jesus, you have called me personally by name, just as you called your first disciples, Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Help me to believe your word and follow you faithfully. Fill me with the joy of the gospel that your light may shine through me to many others."

