



THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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January 24, 2021
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



In our Old Testament passage, Jonah goes to Ninevah – and the opening words repeat God’s instructions to him, giving him a fresh start. Obediently, this time, Jonah goes and proclaims GOD’s judgement to the population of Ninevah. Remarkably, his mission prompts an exceptionally positive reaction as the people publicly acknowledge with genuine contrition their terrible wickedness, and GOD pardons them. GOD gives this repentant prophet a second chance – He calls him again. Ninevah was a very large city – a city important to GOD – an interpretation that would be in keeping with the overall message of the book. Archaeological evidence shows that in the 8th century BC the walled city of Ninevah was about 1½ kms across at it widest part. Some scholars, therefore, take “3 days” as the time

necessary for Jonah to go from place to place within the city as he proclaims his message. It could also mean the “greater Ninevah region” – the city and its surrounding suburbs. The normal method of expressing repentance was to fast, put on sackcloth and throw ashes over your head. The king of Ninevah may possibly have been the Governor of the region. To include the animals in this decree emphasises the seriousness with which the people received Jonah’s message.

In our psalm today, David expressed his feelings to GOD and then reaffirmed his faith. Prayer can release our tensions in times of emotional stress. Trusting GOD to be our rock, salvation, and fortress will change our entire outlook on life. No longer must we be held captive by resentment towards others when they hurt us. When we are resting in GOD’s strength, nothing can shake us. It is tempting to use honour, power, wealth, or prestige to measure people. We may even think that such people are really getting ahead in life. But on GOD’s scales, these people are but a “breath”, a puff of air. What, then,

can tilt the scales when GOD weighs us? Trusting GOD and working for Him (v12). Wealth, honour, power, or prestige add nothing to our value in GOD's eyes – but the faithful work we do for Him has eternal value.

Our Gospel passage today shows us that the LORD thought it better to use the most rustic and common persons as ministers of His own design, so as to underscore that this is a work of divine grace. It seems preposterous from the world's point of view that those without education could be used to instruct the nations. There must have been something divinely compelling in the Saviour's guileless countenance that people, merely upon seeing Him, could trust. The disciples could no longer be concerned with anything pertaining to this earthly life insofar as it might counter the calling of the LORD. All worldly resources are to be left behind in response to the coming of the reign of GOD. The joy of faith makes up for whatever bitterness may accompany repentance.

Imagine if you were faced with a decision to leave your whole life behind – your families, your community, and your friends – to follow JESUS – would you be able to do it? Many factors would need to be considered in facing such a decision.

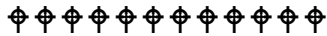
As members of the body of CHRIST, we are reminded here that discipleship and GOD come first. JESUS always brings freedom. There are many powers and principalities in the world, however, that do not want to see us free. Freedom for all always means loss of privilege and power for some.

What does it mean to “repent, and believe the Good News”? The Greek word for repentance is metanoia. Translated literally, this word means “after thought” and was used to refer to a change of mind about something. Repentance is not about feeling guilty and not even about saying you are sorry. Recognising that I have done something wrong when in fact I have is more important but does not guarantee that I will change my behaviour. Repentance means a person has recognised

that his or her whole way of living needs to change. Repentance is never motivated by fear of punishment. It happens when a person recognises that there is a fuller, more joyful way to live. That is what it means to ‘believe in the Gospel.’ If we truly believe that JESUS came to free us from our sins from whatever it is that keeps us from seeing the glory within us that GOD sees, then we are willing to let go of ways of thinking and acting that hold us back.

So, how did our first 4 disciples – Andrew, Simon, James, and John, model repentance? These 4 men were successful fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. It was hard, honest work. JESUS, however, offers them an opportunity to engage in something else with even greater possibilities. Rather than simply earning a living, the disciples have an opportunity to transform the world as “fishers of people”! Rather than bringing fish to market to meet people’s physical needs, they will now be bringing JESUS to meet people’s spiritual needs. By asking these fishermen to leave their lives behind – all

that they know – their work, and their families – JESUS is challenging them to a new way of life, a life of service and discipleship.



Our consumer society has to package and market every commodity with a sales pitch just as slick. Our gospel passage for today could not be further from such packaging. It is stark and unadorned. Much of what these disciples understand at this moment they will progressively forget – and compromises, obtuseness and status-seeking will replace following until, on the eve of JESUS' passion and death, the disciples leave everything to run away from Him. Last week we talked about the calling of Samuel by GOD. This week it is the calling of the first 4 disciples by JESUS. These callings are not an issue of orders. There is no rallying call to a revolutionary war – but there are promises made. Do we, as followers of JESUS, live as though we believe in those promises? How constant and how radical are we in our following of JESUS to which we are invited by our

baptism? How discerning of its demands are we in our contemporary society – and does JESUS have priority in our lives? Within the Gospel, JESUS chooses ordinary people with everyday occupations to be His closest collaborators. Although they were not the most obvious choices for founding His Church, in following JESUS the disciples gained the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding to carry forth JESUS' mission after His death and resurrection. Today, JESUS continues to call us.

In the story of Jonah, we see an immediate response to Jonah's lacklustre preaching with such total and immediate repentance that even their animals joined in – dressed in sackcloth and ashes! So, repentance is ALWAYS possible. Our psalm asks us to “Teach me your ways O LORD – including His unconditional love and forgiveness.

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May we pray:

Almighty and everliving GOD, some days our world seems to slip backward into dangerous areas. Empower us to be Your disciples today. By offering your love to others, help us draw people out of darkness. Lead us all into the light and peace of Your kingdom. This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen

NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible – Zondervan – DA Carson General Editor – Grand Rapids Michigan

Mark – New Testament II – Thomas C Oden General Editor

Life Application Study Bible – NIV – Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan

Celebrating the Lectionary – Year B – Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, VIC 2020

LIVING LITURGY 2021 Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 2020

Daily Prayer 2021, Liturgy Training Publications. Archdiocese of Chicago IL 60609