

**A New Kind of Fishing©**

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20**

**January 21, 2018**

**Rev. Sharlyn Gates**

Has there ever been anything in your life that compelled you – called to your inner being so sweetly, with such a strong force, that you simply had to act on it?

Maybe it was falling head over heels in love. You weren't going to do it, but the first time you saw her face, you were a goner and before you knew it, you found yourself on your knees proposing.

Maybe it was buying your favorite car. You were going to be cautious when you went to that car show in Detroit, you were determined not give in to impulse, but the minute you laid eyes on that sweet ride, you just had to have it!

Don't you wonder if that was how it was with Simon and Andrew and James and John? Don't you think it's really rather odd that this man from Nazareth came walking by these fishermen and invited them to follow him and they just dropped their nets, left their jobs, left their father (which was kind of unheard of) and followed him

Was it the sound of his voice? Was it the way he walked or spoke with authority? Was it the way his eyes looked? Were they gentle and warm and full of sparkle, maybe even some fun?

Maybe they already knew him, or knew of him. Maybe he had already been preaching and meeting people. Maybe they had had conversations with him and they already believed he was an interesting, unique teacher.

But maybe not.

The thing with Mark is that we are not told much. Mark doesn't waste time setting things up for us. We don't have a birth story or the story of the young Jesus in the temple. We dive right in to Jesus baptism by John the Baptist, his temptation in the wilderness (which we will come back to during Lent) and now the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Note that his ministry isn't a solo act. From the beginning, Jesus didn't do ministry all by himself. He searched and called disciples – these four – and then, eight others, to walk where he walked and to work along side him.

In Mark, there is always a sense of immediacy. In fact, we hear Mark say throughout his book, the word "immediately." (And immediately they left their nets ... ) Remember, we are looking at the story of Jesus through a particular lens – the lens of Mark, who is writing down the stories he has heard over and over about Jesus, and he is writing to a particular audience: peasants who are oppressed by those in power.

No wonder he writes with immediacy. No wonder he jumps ahead on into the meat of Jesus mission on earth. The people need encouragement and hope – and they need it NOW.

“The time is fulfilled,” Jesus said, “and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

All that you’ve been hoping for, waiting for, believing in from ages past – it’s here! What the prophets prophesied – that the Messiah would come and usher in a new age – that time is now!

It’s such an interesting paradigm, when you think about it. The Bible tells us that the coming of Jesus meant that the kingdom of heaven has come to us. And yet, the Bible also tells us that it is coming.

It’s the same with Jesus, himself. At Christmas, we celebrate his birth. And during Advent we wait for his coming. During Lent, we reflect on the meaning of his death with a somber spirit. But we know that Easter came – that resurrection morning. Even though we are somber, Easter came, and as we prepare for it each year, it keeps coming.

It’s happened, but not yet. The kingdom is here, but it’s not complete.

That’s not too hard to understand, is it? Well for me it sometimes is.

Jesus did come, but he also died and left. Yet he is here with us in Spirit. And someday he will come again, the Scriptures tell us. With Jesus came the good news message – a new day is here. God’s kingdom is at hand; it has come into our presence because of God’s son and the work and ministry he did.

Hope is among us; and grace; and forgiveness; and healing; and eternal life. That’s how we experience God’s kingdom now.

But, we can’t help but look around and know that, even in all the pleasures of life, there are still heartaches. There is still brokenness and sorrow and pain.

The Kingdom of heaven is near and yes, we’ve seen signs of it, but it surely is not complete yet. It will be, someday, when Christ returns, but for now we have much more hope than we could have possibly had without Jesus coming to show it to us.

Whatever it was that compelled those first disciples to drop everything and follow Jesus, we can’t know for sure. But surely they sensed that they were in the presence of one whose very being had authority and grace and love. Surely they knew that with him there was an urgency for following and learning and taking the good news to as many people as possible.

Jesus said “Repent!”

Remember that in Mark, repent means “to see differently.” To see differently, and then to change your life accordingly. Repenting is not automatically about being full of remorse and guilt. It *is* about seeing in a new way and deciding to live into that new way.

Of course, if you see in a different way that what you have been doing has been hurtful or destructive to someone else, or to yourself, -- if you see that it goes against God’s plan for us, you will probably have remorse. But you can trust that Jesus’ word and works are true. We are forgiven in him.

Whatever it was, these disciples certainly seemed to see differently. They saw Jesus and they were compelled to follow – to be a part of his mission.

Which brings me to two questions:

Have you seen the good news in Jesus and been compelled to drop your nets and be his disciple? When did you do it? When did you decide to let go of the old nets, the old life, and make the decision – immediately – to follow Christ? Has it been a life long decision, or something that happened suddenly?

How has it changed your life? Are you still passionate about it? Do others see that passion in you?

If not, why? Are you ready now to answer that call? To drop your nets? Do you see such trustworthiness in Jesus that you are sure it is the thing to do? If you haven’t, but you are ready, come and talk to me and I will help you. Or talk to one of our elders. Do you know that there are several elders who are always willing to pray for you and with you? As am I.

The other question I have is this: If we are his disciples, bearing the good news that the kingdom is at hand, do we tell others with such authenticity and passion that they are compelled to come to him and want to be his disciple as well?

If Jesus calls disciples still today, as he did so long ago beside the Sea of Galilee, wouldn’t his desire be for his disciples to help him reach out to others, to take that kingdom of heaven to them as well?

Do others see Christ in you? Do they see your passion for the faith, your love of Christ and His church? Do you sense your desire for them to have the same joy and passion as those early disciples who trusted Jesus so much they left it all, and followed him?

We can choose to be a Jonah, who dropped what he was doing and ran in the opposite direction from where God wanted him to go. Jonah, who, instead of being thankful that God forgave the Ninevites when they repented, when they saw differently and changed their lives, Jonah was resentful. We could be a Jonah.

Or, we can gladly say, I am a disciple. I am compelled to share in the ministry of compassion, grace, forgiveness, of mercy and love. I am compelled to join the Fishers of Men Mission.

Wouldn't you love to see others compelled to come to worship and to become real Disciples of Christ? It starts with Christ's body – you and me. The kingdom of heaven is at hand – and it looks like the Church that Christ called into being to continue his mission of fishing for people – of making disciples – of building His body. It is the place where we practice kingdom living until he comes again.

Thanks be to God that he continues to call, compelling us to drop our nets, to see things anew, and to gladly follow in his footsteps. May we have the heart and mind of Christ – such a great desire to share the good news that Christ has given us so that others find it compelling to join us.

Amen.

© *Copyright 2018. All Rights Reserved.*