

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom and to teach with authority. Anoint us with the power of your Spirit that we, too, may bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day

Alleluia. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing every disease. Alleluia. (Matthew 4:23 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

You heard it whispered around the office, haven't you? Someone in the office is the "Jesus Freak". They always steer every discussion to their theological preference and inevitably it annoys many in the office. We walk the hallways of our schools and it's there too. Someone is the teacher's pet, little miss or mister perfect always reminding others that this or that is not in line with the will of a holy God. The results are usually the same – not many desire to associate with the the little Bible thumper. At home parents and siblings see the sin which is raging in one another's lives and the question throbs in the brain like pain in the thumb struck by a hammer, "should I bring all this up and face the inevitable fight that will come?" It's so easy for us to succumb to the despair and cynicism which Satan constantly sets in the path of the Christian. "I know I'm only going to get made fun of! People won't like me anymore! It'll make the dinner table awkward. So why do I need to do anything at all? It's not my business anyway. Let them figure it out!"

Today in our lesson Jesus, picks an odd time to start asking for full blown public commitment from the disciples. As He calls out to them, so He also speaks to us today, **NOW IS THE TIME! IT'S TIME TO REPENT AND BELIEVE. IT'S TIME TO FOLLOW AND FISH.**

Our lesson starts out with more than a historical reference point. *14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Herod had just seized and incarcerated John the Baptist. His message was a carbon copy of the one Jesus now begins to raise in Galilee, yes, a backwater district of Israel but still on under Herod's jurisdiction. It would seem to reason that this message which got John into trouble, deep enough that His head will be presented on a silver platter in the not-so-distant future, would get anyone else in trouble too. Still here is Jesus proclaiming, heralding a message that was never really John's but always God's saving Word, *Repent and believe in the good news.*

TEXT: Mark 1:14–20

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" 16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Brothers and sisters, it's because such a message is needed. You see Jesus knows the men He is calling. He knows us too. Dare I say it, I can recall instances in high school even college, (yes, even in our synodical training schools) when those thoughts from our introduction were my own. When the Word was inconvenient, and my sin had gotten the better of me and someone in love reached out to help and I didn't want to listen. There are still times, when I know the job God has called me to do, when I know I am to be the watchman on the wall but that should I stick my neck out it's probably going to get chopped off, people are probably going to get ticked off and while I'll still do it, I'd be lying to say I love it or that I haven't found myself hesitating to do it.

How about you? Parents, do you always relish the opportunity to correct, rebuke, and encourage as your children present it to you, even when they are full grown and should know better? Kids, when the conversations get wild and crazy and the teachers get bashed, or the parents get trashed do you discourage it, knowing you're gonna get it next or do you join in because it's easier to go with the flow than against it? At work, is it easier to join in and crucify the boss when their back is turned than defend, speak well of them and take the words and actions of other in the kindest possible way?

It's all sin, of which I'm as guilty as the next guy and so fellow Christians **NOW IS THE TIME! IT'S TIME TO REPENT AND BELIEVE.** In Bible Class we recently have had the opportunity to discuss repentance a little as we journey through the book of Luke. (spoiler alert our Sunday attendees) As we talked Wednesday, I told the group I have always liked the picture I heard from somewhere but no longer recall the origin. Repentance is crumbling at the foot of the cross. Crumbling because I cannot carry the load of my own sin. Crumbling because the guilt and sorrow are more than I can bear. I want to be done with it. I want it all to stop but I don't know how. I can't do it on my own. I'm lost and helpless. But then this crumbling occurs with God in view. At the foot of the cross, Jesus call has never been more imminent *The Kingdom of God is near!* There He pays for every offense that I have caused, every hesitant moment in which doubt won, every blown opportunity as I watched when I should have warned, it's all paid for in full in blood and sorrow which should have been my own as He gives me the righteousness I could never claim but which He perfectly secured. The message is one of complete forgiveness. It is the glory of the Gospel. Brothers and sisters, **NOW IS THE TIME!** (As if there is ever a bad time) **IT'S TIME TO REPENT AND BELIEVE.**

What Jesus does next is utterly mind blowing. *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."* We like to romanticize the Apostles, in our minds we place them on pedestals as if there was something about these men which elevated them above others and made Jesus seek them out. In truth, they are just like us. Andrew largely avoids the magnifying glass of God's Word but Peter, bold and blunt as he is, often finds himself right underneath it. No doubt, he is still more impressive of a specimen than I will ever be but sin sticks to him as does to us. He literally sinks in the winds and the waves of his own doubt (Matthew 14:30). He must be rebuked by Jesus when he promises to stand in the way of the will of God (Mark 8:33) and when the moment comes for our bold and brash friend to stand and be number, He wilts like a leaf and denies his Lord (Mark 14:66-71). Paul will even need to set him straight in the mission field when the Judaizers have him shying away from the gentiles to whom he was sent (Galatians 2:11-21).

Jesus knows all of it and more and still the invitation, *Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.* Now let's be crystal clear here. This is a specific call given to these men at this

time. You and I have not necessarily been given the call to leave behind our livelihood and even the families we work so hard for to follow after Jesus for 3 years in the same way Andrew and Peter do. That said God through Peter will remind all of us, “⁹ *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).*” Jesus himself will speak to us all when He announces, “*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).*” So while we maybe called to work within our various vocations, in our families, with our friends, even as we give our quiet witness at work make no mistake about it Jesus does call us to follow after Him and to fish with Him for humanity. It's amazing that He does it but He calls out to fallen human beings like us and asks us to do His work, support His work, encourage His work in the world around us.

How can we do it? Paul tells the Corinthians, *Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).*”

So we do the unthinkable, because of the Word of God. It's that word which makes all the difference. Paul tells the Romans of its explosive power, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Romans 1:16).*” He reminds Timothy of the wisdom that it brings, “*from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).* Finally, Paul tells us the Word is the very armor and weaponry that can fortify our frail bodies against the greatest foes as we focus through it on Christ Jesus (Ephesians 6:10-18). It is this Word which issues the call and through which the call is issued. It is this Word which allowed Peter, Andrew, James and John to leave everything and follow. It is this Word which issues **A CALL STRONG ENOUGH TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORK OF GOD THROUGH FRAIL AND INEPT WORKMEN.**

It has been said that Christianity picks odd times to rear its head in the world around it. That would seem to be true in our lesson today and it's often true in the pages of scripture. Our world today is no friendlier to Christianity than it was in Jesus day, and it's not getting any better. While every ounce of our sinful nature might tell us now is not the time to confess Christ, today Jesus calls. In a world full of excuses, He calls to us, you, **NOW IS THE TIME! IT'S TIME TO REPENT AND BELIEVE. IT'S TIME TO FOLLOW AND FISH.** Amen!