



3RD Sunday after the Epiphany

Sunday, January 21st, 2018

Jonah 3:1-5, 10;

Psalm 62:6-14;

1 Corinthians 7:29-31;

Mark 1:14-20

1ST READING

A Reading from the Book of Jonah

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

JONAH 3:1-5, 10

PSALM 62:6-14

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- 6 For God alone my soul in silence waits; * truly, my hope is in him.
7 He alone is my rock and my salvation, * my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.
8 In God is my safety and my honour; * God is my strong rock and my refuge.
9 Put your trust in him always, O people, * pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.
10 Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath, * even those of low estate cannot be trusted.
11 On the scales they are lighter than a breath, * all of them together.
12 Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride; * though wealth increase, set not
y our heart upon it.
13 God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, * that power belongs to God.
14 Steadfast love is yours, O Lord, * for you repay everyone according to his deeds.

Lord God, in a threatening world we look to you as our rock of hope. Hear us as we pour out our hearts to you, and give us your grace and protection, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

2ND READING

A Reading from the 1ST Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31

GOSPEL READING

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ According to Mark

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

MARK 1:14-20

For the present form of this world is passing away.

Sally's great-grandfather built the house in which she was raised. It still stands in Mt. Clemens. It is a two story home with wood siding painted white. It looks like most buildings of the era still in use. There is a front porch, a bay window and some shrubbery. She was raised in a nice home — a home mainly like others, and yet a home with an interesting difference.

At the time of construction, something new was in the air. Home builders were confronted with an advancement in technology that was growing in popularity. Her great-grandfather said it was a fad, really. He wasn't sure that there was a long-term future for this latest innovation. So what did he do? He opted to put in traditional technology adjacent to the new. So he would be ready with which ever technology proved to be favoured by the public in the long term.

Yes, Sally's great-grandfather had built their house wired for electricity and fitted with gas conduits. If one races over to the house today, climbs on a ladder and goes to the top of any of the high ceilinged rooms to open up a light fixture, guess what one will find? Yes, one will find the familiar wires we know leading to the base of the light bulbs. AND one will also find the ends of hollow conduits ready to support gaslights, should they come back into popularity like he thought they would.

Change — preparing for possible change. Great-grandpa McInerney felt pretty good about himself by the way he in a sense *hedged his bets* to be ready for any eventuality. However, we are not always provided with advance warnings or indicators that major change is on the way. Sometimes, we are not even aware of the beginning of change taking place until too late to do anything but adapt. And there are those times when change can come abruptly and we are caught off guard as we seek to react sensibly.

It is frequently pointed out that our God never changes. God is unchangeable — and that is correct. Some think that means that if God looked in a mirror every day, God would see that exact same image looking back. It would also mean that anything God created would remain the same, just as God created it. But when we think about it, all the evidence takes us in a different direction.

For all around us we can see that everything God has created does not stay the same. At one end of the scale we have people — you and me and all the others around us. Our mirrors tell us that we indeed do change — change a lot over our lives! At the other end of the spectrum are the stars and the planets. All of these are also in a sometimes slow but always sure state of transformation from one way of being to another. So we come to realize that we have an unchangeable God who is at the same time the creator of change in all that exists. According to this morning's reading from the book of Jonah, God even allows God's own mind to change — God's mind can change; but not God's substance.

The Gospel for today begins with Jesus walking along the shore seeking out the people he wanted as his disciples. His eyes rested on Andrew, Simon, James and John. Now notice what Jesus did not do. He was not like a modern day head hunter. There were no sales pitches for the new jobs he was offering. There were no promises of improved income; or of any income at all! And there was no time given for any of these men to think it over to discuss the new opportunity with their families. In fact there was no asking, no invitation at all. These fishermen were given a directive — *Follow me!*

Now what seems so amazing in this story to me, was that each of them without hesitation said in effect, *ok!* Can you imagine yourself tending to your daily duties while a man you have never seen before comes up and says, *Follow me, I will make you fishers of men.*? Can you imagine leaving your aging father to his own devices to carry on the family business with less help? Yet, Jesus was asking total commitment as they were to venture into an unknown future. God had changed their lives forever. Amazingly, the father, Zebedee is not recorded as trying to dissuade any of these men.

God is the author of change. And we are confronted every day with changes that modify the way we think and live as people. We should especially not neglect those changes instilled by God that shape the way we treat one another. For the Gospels are about changing our lives. Jesus came to earth to bring about change — change we are called to accept, as God's people.

We, too, are asked by Christ to *Follow me!* Does this mean for us to up and leave our families, other loved ones, communities and more just like Simon, Andrew, James and John? Maybe sometimes. But for most of us, Jesus' call to us is usually to help bring Christ's love to people who are all around to us in our daily and ongoing lives. Our love in action is needed by our close family members, our neighbours, our parish family members, our many communities and our nations. Often even working close to home we also may find ourselves helping to make the world a better place. And that can mean change in our lives.

We may find old ways are not really as we would like them to be. Our actions may not be as based in love as we would like. Or maybe we have depended on other ways of faulty thinking that really do not hit the mark in our relationships with others.

Life is about how we seek to relate to God, to one another, and to the earth over which we have been given stewardship. It very well may be a time for change in our way of living. Change can be good or it can be anything but good. Jesus says *Follow me!* In our faithfulness to God, in whatever loving way God calls us, we are to be open to the *change* to which God calls us!