

Mark 1:14-20 New Revised Standard Version

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news[a] of God,[b] 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;[c] repent, and believe in the good news.”

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

16 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. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1:14-20 The Message

14-15 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God: “Time’s up! God’s kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message.”

16-18 Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions. They dropped their nets and followed.

19-20 A dozen yards or so down the beach, he saw the brothers James and John, Zebedee’s sons. They were in the boat, mending their fishnets. Right off, he made the same offer. Immediately, they left their father Zebedee, the boat, and the hired hands, and followed.

Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts meet with your gracious approval, my strength, my rock, and the one we trust and follow. Amen.

I would like to preach four points today. The first point as we begin the Gospel of Mark is Jesus’ first work. What does he do? “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming.” The first work Jesus does is proclaim or we could say preach, he preaches the good news of God. And what is this good news? The good news is the Kingdom of God is near. The

good news is the Kingdom of God is here. The good news is the Kingdom of God is now.

And for the people of Ancient Israel, this untamed Jesus of Mark declaring that the Kingdom is near is declaring a world changing, life altering message. The Kingdom of God is near, not hidden away in the holy of holies of the temple. The King is near, the King who is too holy, too righteous for sinful humanity is coming here anyway.

Jesus preaches repentance. It's the time to change minds, to change direction of lives because of this good news. John has just been arrested for doing the exact same thing. Jesus comes preaching anyway. And so while the Kingdom coming near might have been unsafe, it might have resulted in death (and did), it was also radical transformational, it was incredible news. This is a King who cares about and is concerned with people. One who breaks the rules of clean and unclean, breaks the rules of lawful and unlawful, of righteous and unrighteous.

Change is hard isn't it. In this season of covid change is hard. Zoom is change. Change is hard. But I've seen zoom change lives. As we studied white privilege this year I've seen my mother grow. She gets it, she gets white privilege. It's about "Braving the Wilderness" our last book study. To risk and be vulnerable is where lives are changed. The LSBB group proclaims this radical, vulnerable message of Jesus is for ALL people and creation, and lives are being changed and transformed.

Brené Brown who wrote "Braving the Wilderness" describes vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. It's that unstable feeling we get she says when we step out of our comfort zone or do something that forces us to loosen control." That's what Jesus is asking us to do when he says repent. Change, be transformed the Kingdom of God is here, He says I'm here, I've got you, it will not only be all right, I'm here and I'm the best news you could ever hope for.

My second point and the second thing that Jesus does here is he recruits followers. William Loader wrote this week "Whatever else is true about the Good News that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near, it is NOT a one man show." As we all know it takes a village, creating relationships that embody the Good News."

My third point is Jesus sees Simon and Andrew as they are actively fishing; and then sees James and John as they are in their boat mending their nets. Sometimes we idealize Jesus' world and imagine his entourage is made up of destitute people. This is a comfortable way to think about this following and makes us spectators. These fishermen were not destitute, they had jobs and provided for their community. In most movements for change, it is those who have enough to eat and enough education to take initiatives. It remains the challenge for all of us who have resources today.

“Follow me” is the call to participate with God in God’s own saving work. This work is always about moving to a larger vision, experiencing that our little story of life is connected to and a part of a much larger story of life, God’s life. The “follow me” moments of life are less about where we are going or what we are doing, and more about who we are becoming.

My fourth point is this radical call to follow isn’t for everyone. There is Zebedee left in the boat with his hired help. Someone still needs to mend the nets and people will still need fish.

Jesus has a way of showing up in the ordinary places of life and interrupting the daily routines of casting and mending nets. That’s what he did to the lives of Simon and Andrew, James and John. That’s what he does to your life and my life today. Amen.

Announcements:

The reason I am at Immanuel instead of Bethesda on its Annual Meeting day is that Owen (Immanuel’s pianist) plays at Messiah in Washburn every other week and it would have put Pastor Nancy in a bind.

I will be attending our Winter Theological Event this evening and Monday via zoom with other pastors, deacons, and Sam’s from the Northwest Synod of WI. Our theme this year “Finding Our Way to a Wider Welcome” this event is usually held in Eau Claire and costs around \$400. This year the cost is \$25.

If you have not called to receive your vaccine for covid-19 please call the Bayfield County Nurse today at 715-373-3324.

Monday, join Pastor Lawrence (Bayfield Presbyterian Church) on zoom for Lenten Lectionary Study. This is a study of the scriptures for Lent. More about asking questions than getting answers.

Books "Holy Envy" by Barbara Brown Taylor will arrive this Wednesday or Thursday at Apostle Island Booksellers and be available for pick-up at Bethesda and Immanuel. Thanks to Sheryl and Marty Burkel and their Thrivent Action Team there is no cost for the book. Book Study begins Thursday, February 4 at 10:30 - 11:30.

Thursday, January 28

Holy Communion will be served at 1:00. A safe procedure is in place approved by Bethesda Council and the Bayfield County Nurse. **You must call to sign up. 715-779-5611.** State whether you prefer a wheat wafer/ gluten free wafer, and wine/juice. This is only communion, not a full worship service. You will be directed how to proceed after entering Bethesda.

Please keep Bill Compton in your prayers and better yet if you know him give him a call, 715-779-5406. Bill's brother Jim passed away this past week. His sister Joyce passed away a couple weeks ago and daughter-in-law a few months ago.

Birthdays this week:

Karen Wrieden - Tuesday, January 26

Dean Rau - Wednesday, January 27