



Introduction

As we continue through the time after Epiphany, stories of the call to discipleship show us the implications of our baptismal calling to show Christ to the world. Jesus begins proclaiming the good news and calling people to repentance right after John the Baptist is arrested for preaching in a similar way. Knowing that John was later executed, we see at the very outset the cost of discipleship. Still, the two sets of brothers leave everything they have known and worked for all their lives to follow Jesus and fish for people.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,
have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✚ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 661 / LBW # 390

I Love to Tell the Story

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

First Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah's dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question "On whom should God have mercy?"

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 62:5-12

⁵For God alone I wait in silence;
truly, my hope is in God.

⁶**God alone is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold, so that I shall never be shaken.**

⁷In God is my deliverance and my honor;
God is my strong rock and my refuge.

⁸**Put your trust in God always, O people,
pour out your hearts before the one who is our refuge.**

⁹Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath;
those of low estate cannot be trusted.
Placed on the scales together they weigh even less than a breath.

¹⁰**Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride;
though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.**

¹¹God has spoken once, twice have I heard it,
that power belongs to God.

¹²**Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord,
for you repay all according to their deeds.**

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as "the gospel" or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

I don't know about you, but when I saw Jonah's name on the Old Testament passage, one thing came to mind. That's the guy that was swallowed up by a big fish. I am sure someone else does the same thing when he or she thinks of Jonah. It is a cute story of what happens when one of us tries to run from God.

However, we miss a lot if that is all we think of. God had called Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to repent. They were called to turn from their sinful activities and come back to God and God's ways. As we all know, Jonah tried to run from this task. In fact, he had literally traveled by boat in the opposite direction from Nineveh. That is when Jonah was swallowed by a big fish and spent the three days in the fish's belly and then was deposited onto the beach.

The story continues when God gave Jonah another chance to follow God's will. God is always doing that. Jonah got the point. He picked himself up and went into Nineveh, shouting that God will destroy them if they don't repent. Nineveh does ask for forgiveness, every one of them, from the King of Nineveh to the average people and animals on the streets.

Guess what happens next? As we can see in verse ten, God shows mercy and changes his mind towards the people of Nineveh. God relents, as another version phrases it. God leans toward mercy and decide not to punish Nineveh.

God's mercy is seen several times in the books prior to Jonah. So Jonah knows that God has shown mercy in the past. In fact, in chapter 4, Jonah says, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing."

Then why does Jonah head the other way from Nineveh? Why does Jonah get mad about God forgiven the folks in Nineveh?

Well for one thing, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Assyria had conquered and ruled a huge portion of land in the Middle East. That included the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the town of Samaria. Jonah would have considered Assyrians as violent barbarians and enemies of Israel. Jonah would have wanted Nineveh destroyed. He did not want God to forgive them and allow them to survive. That is why Jonah ran in the beginning and why he argued with God about giving them mercy. Jonah put his national beliefs first.

But, God sees things differently than Jonah and us. God sees all of humanity, and creation, as redeemable. God loves all of the folks and wants everyone to turn to God in thought, word, and deed. So, God sees the people of Nineveh just like God sees the people of Israel. They all are worthy of God's attention and God's mercy. God will offer forgiveness to the Gentiles as well as to the Jewish people. That includes us.

Jesus is a part of the Godhead that wants everyone to repent. The little baby that we heard about being born a few weeks ago, has been baptized and is going forth into the world to proclaim God's good news to the world. Jesus did not try to hide or run like Jonah did.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus calls for us to repent and to believe. To believe in the Triune God. Jesus brings the Kingdom of God to the people. With Jesus, the Kingdom of God on earth starts and continues throughout history until Jesus returns. Jesus brings love and mercy to us. He goes on to heal the sick and comfort those who need it.

Jesus calls us to follow him. Just like he called Simon, Andrew, John, and James. He calls for us to show mercy, to love one another, to be "fishers of men." We are called, with all the saints, to show God to the world and to extend God's message of repentance and belief in God's mercy and love. God walks with us on this journey and guide us through the Holy Spirit.

We can be like Jonah and try to run away. We can even try to run the other direction. But we do not outrun God, God still knows where we are. God will give us second - or third, fourth, multiple - chances to return to God. Just like with Nineveh, God changes his mind and forgive us. Have faith that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will show mercy to us. Let us be true followers of Jesus, showing mercy and love for one another, our family, friends, neighbors, strangers and even enemies. Amen

Hymn of the Day ELW # 810 / LBW # 503

O Jesus, I Have Promised

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

For the church throughout the world, for pastors and teachers and interns, for deacons and deaconesses, and for musicians and servers, that all proclaim the good news of God's reconciling love, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For skies and seas, for birds and fish, for favorable weather and clean water, and for the well-being of creation, that God raise up advocates and scientists to guide our care for all the earth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who provide leadership in our cities and nation, and around the world, for nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, for planning commissions and homeless advocates, that God inspire all people in the just use of wealth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who are sick, distressed, or grieving; for the outcast and all who await relief especially those we name now, that in the midst of suffering, God's peace and mercy surround them, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For our congregation and community, for families big and small, that God's steadfast love serve as a model for all relationships, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving for our ancestors in the faith whose lives serve as an example of gospel living, that they point us to salvation through Christ, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 673 / LBW 400

God, Whose Almighty Word

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Vicar Mike Lang.