

Mark 1:14-20^{v vi}

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.

^v About the Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

Today's reading recounts the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He proclaims "the good news of God" that the "kingdom of God has come near" (v. 14). God's promised rule over all that has been created and all God's past acts for salvation are now coming to fruition. Though God's rule is present in Jesus, its full realization remains in the future.

The response to the presence of God's kingdom is conversion or repentance. In the Greek and Hebrew sense of the word, this is not a feeling of sorrow but the action of turning around, a total reorientation of self to God, not intellectual assent to a set of propositions nor an emotional reaction but a total response of oneself to the message.

While elsewhere in scripture the image of fishing for people is used as an image of judgment, Jesus uses it to explain the work of evangelism. Like these disciples, we must take the skills learned through our ordinary lives and redirect them to the work of the kingdom.

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^{vi} Reflection and Response

Today's scriptures remind us that the world we know is passing away. This refers not only to the rapid speed of technological change, but also to the fact that with every breath, our lives slip away another notch. Our

opportunities to do good are passing; our relationships alter in ways too subtle to sense. That knowledge might lead us to panic, but the worst response would be to cling even tighter to this passing world.

None of the disciples in today's readings were able to sink roots too deeply into this earth, or fishing nets too far into the sea. The fishermen who heed Jesus' call must drop everything to follow a rabbi who (they learn) has no home and expects them to be as itinerant as he.

It is noteworthy that the call to Simon, Andrew, James and John comes while they are at work. They are not at the synagogue, but at the job. The fact that Christ meets them there invites us to re-examine our own places of work. Do we discern whether our job is fulfilling and change it if it's demeaning? Do we notice if it's destructive and protest if it's oppressive?

Responding to the call may be fearsome, but two forces sustain us. The first is the faithfulness of God, who meets our tiny advances with giant steps of reassurance. Another encouragement is the fact that we do not journey alone. When Andrew and Simon launch a new life, they join the good company of Noah, Abraham, Job, Ruth and many others who discover God's faithfulness only when they are most vulnerable. Thinking they have lost the secure path, they find God's marvelous map.