

## **Finding Life: The Cost**

**3 Epiphany B    Jan. 23/24, 2020    Rev. Dr. David Gardner Tweed**

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the dominion of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” 16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for human beings.” 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As Jesus went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately Jesus called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

*The “good news” that we call the book of Mark is the first full gospel written, probably around 70 in Rome, and it proclaims to assemblies of believers the meaning of Jesus’ ministry, miracles, and death. For Mark, the crucified Christ is the Messiah, risen now at the beginning of the end time, and hidden in the word proclaimed. In today’s excerpt, Jesus’ ministry begins, following immediately after his baptism and temptation. The narrative means not to be an accurate report of Jesus’ ministry—too bad for Zebedee’s father if it was—but Mark’s indication of the urgency of Christ’s call to his hearers.*

*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 in gratitude/joy with repentance & faith not dread, obligation or a list of “have-tos”.*

*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.*

*When Jesus calls us to believe in the good news and follow him, our lives are “immediately” altered. The adverb “immediately” appears twice here and 27 times in*

*the NRSV translation of Mark's gospel, not counting all the use of "at once." So it is that we stand for the gospel reading, on our feet, ready to follow.*

*The gospel describes the first disciples as **fishermen**. This may be a memory of the profession of some in the Jesus movement. As well, it establishes the early Christian imagery of baptism as water, believers as water-dwellers, the net as the gospel, and the boat as the church. The Greek of the early Christian creed, "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior," presents the acronym i-ch-th-u-s, the Greek word for fish, and fish swim through much Christian iconography.*

*The gospel introduces the image of "the **kingdom** of God." Arguably the most important image in the New Testament, the kingdom language evoked Israelite memory of a time of political independence. Yet this kingdom is, according to Mark, newly "of God," that is, of a realm in which life belongs to and reflects God. The designation of Jesus as Christ, that is, the one anointed by God for power to reign, relies on the kingdom imagery. It is not an image easily accessible for twenty-first century believers. In the New Testament, *basileia* is a complex term, not solely a reference to either the church or an afterlife, but to a life wholly transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

### **Some Bible insights:**

- 1) John the Baptist is arrested (v14) for speaking the truth to power in denouncing Herod's marriage to his brother's wife (who was still married to him!). John eventually pays with his head on a platter.
- 2) The lection/reading has 2 parts: v14-15 is Jesus' announcement/summary of his ministry; v16-20 the Calling of the 4 Disciples
- 3) The time v15 (Kairos [*time of eternal significance*] not Chronos [*everyday life*]) of history is complete, full, ready for God's inbreaking.
- 4) The dominion of God is a concept not about oppression or supervision but of connection.... a willing & desired relationship with the Source of Life.
- 5) To repent is to re-think/re-orient about TURNING TOWARD a desired vision we sense being called toward & saying NO to actions/attitudes/behaviors/thinking that are drawing us away.
- 6) The Call to discipleship comes to regular folks in everyday life-here people who fish. We don't know the tone or approach Jesus used but the result is clear.
- 7) Two sets of brothers immediately leave all they know to follow this Teacher.

- 8) Immediately is used 27 times in Mark; the author focuses on urgency; NOW!
- 9) Fishing for people has multiple layers of meaning: To catch or gather yes, yet to fish means the fish die – this is the more conservative Protestant view in that we DIE to sin and rise to a new life ‘caught up’ in the gospel way; also, the other, more Grace-oriented view: to fish is to SAVE the fish from the monsters (cf. Demons) of the deep (the unknown) and to give them a new connection to meaning, purpose & usefulness.

### **Some Practical LIFE – (Living In Faith Everyday) insights/practices:**

- A) Live with your eyes open to the pain, inequities, injustices of the world. Jesus advances even knowing that John – his cousin - pays the ultimate price. Watch for where God’s presence is moving and attempt to catch the “wave” of energy of that Presence – it will give you hope! As you do so you are responding to the proclamation of the kingdom coming near and proclaiming it yourself in your words/deeds/actions/beliefs and especially interactions with others. The pain matters that you experience because you care for and partner with others and seek to bring God’s healing to the world. Are you open to talking about others’ pain, injustice, complaints or is it only a springboard to telling your tales of woe? Stay with them, be with them in the confusion and pain. Acknowledge your pain as you live life – your losses, what generosity and your values demand, the struggle/wrestling with God through the night to live as you feel you should.
- B) Listen/look/feel the intersection of Kairos moments that come near. Kairos moments are when you see and marvel at the forest even when you are in it; its when you express your love and appreciation for others and God in deeds, words, actions, gestures even though everything is just fine and the family or marriage is in good shape; its when momentous times of change or pain or celebration are at your doorstep and you take a moment and peer into the window of generational eternity and think/pray/reflect on what they mean and express it out loud.