

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Jonah 3:1-5,10; Psalm 25:4-9; I Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

This past week we witnessed the peaceful transition of power in our Nation's Capital with the inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th President of our Nation and the first female Vice President in our Nation's history, Kamala Harris. We also heard President Biden's inaugural address, his first words to the American people.

We pray for President Biden and Vice President Harris and their administration that God would guide them and give them wisdom, courage and humility to truly govern "Under God."

In Our Gospel lesson from Mark Chapter 1, we heard what could be called **Jesus' inaugural address**. Mark briefly mentions the transition from John to Jesus. John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, now finds himself in prison. Jesus then comes to Galilee to give his inaugural address and begin his public ministry.

While Jesus' inaugural address is short, it is packed with meaning and lays out the fundamental focus of His mission, the Kingdom of God. His address is as relevant today as when Jesus first spoke it. Mark writes:

**"After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:
"This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel."**

Mark understands Jesus' inaugural address as revealing the Gospel of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ. The "Gospel of God" is the title of Jesus address.

Gospel means good news. According to Rory Cooney, Mark appropriated the word "Gospel" from the Roman's. "Gospel was a word used in the Roman empire to describe the victory of the emperor or one of his generals over his enemies." It was also used to announce the good news of healing from illness, end of war and the birth of an emperor.

The Gospel of God is the Good News of God's love, healing, presence and forgiveness. The Good News of the Kingdom and the victory of God through Jesus' Passion, His sacrifice, death and resurrection.

Jesus begins: **“This is the Time of fulfillment.”** The Greek word used for TIME is “Kairos”. We are familiar with the Greek word “Chronos,” where we get the word “chronology,” meaning linear time, moment by moment time. The day in and day out minutes of our lives. Kairos is God’s time. Kairos is God’s moment. A moment that defines all others.

The first time I remember ever experiencing a Kairos moment was when I was 12 years old and gave my life to Christ at a Billy Graham crusade. I had this overwhelming sense of God’s love and presence, and it changes my life forever. Time seemed to stop. I pray you have had Kairos moments. Jesus longs to break into our lives.

This Kairos moment is a Kairos of all Kairos moments. Like Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection. This Kairos time Jesus inaugurates his public ministry. “This is the time of fulfillment. In God’s timing Jesus is the fulfillment of the Hebrew peoples long awaited Messiah. Jesus is the prophet like Moses. Not only does Jesus communion with God like Moses. Jesus is God. Jesus is the very heart and face of God. God promised in Jeremiah that he would make a new covenant with the house of Israel. Jesus is the New Covenant. Jesus raising the cup on the night of his arrest said, “This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood poured out for you, for the forgiveness of your sins.” Jesus is the fulfillment and “YES” of all God’s promises. Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to King David that his Kingdom would have no end.

But this Kairos moment when Christ appeared is not only the fulfillment of the past, in Jesus we have the fulfillment of God’s will and purposes past, present and future. He is the fulfillment of all of our true longings, all of our desires, all of our hopes. All that God has promised and longs to give us is fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus goes on to say: **“The kingdom of God is at hand”**

The Kingdom is at hand because the King is present. The Kingdom is here because the King of the Kingdom is here. Jesus would spend the rest of his life preaching and teaching and demonstrating in His very life what the Kingdom of God was all about. There is mystery though to the Kingdom. Jesus doesn’t so much define the Kingdom as he gives us ways to see and understand it. It is one of the reasons Jesus spoke in parables and most of His parables were about the Kingdom. Jesus said, the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that is so small yet grows to be of great

size that even the birds can make their nests in it. The Kingdom is like a little leaven which affects the whole loaf causing it to rise. The Kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field - that once found, you are willing to abandon everything for the sake of that treasure.

Moreover, the Kingdom is both visible and invisible. It is now and not yet. Now in the presence, purpose, love, mercy and good news of Jesus. Now, in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Now, in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Now as we love one another, serve and care for the poor. Now, in every heart that loves Jesus and walks in His ways. The Kingdom is NOW! God is here. However, it is also Not Yet, in that we still live in a broken world. Sin, division, hatred, loneliness, anger, bitterness still infect our lives. COVID -19 is an ever present reminder that we are still a people waiting for God's Kingdom to come in all its glory, where death will be no more, mourning, crying and pain will be no more.

Thank God we live on this side of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. We know the God has the final word. We know Jesus, our King and His Kingdom, have the final word. The victory has been won. Hang on, stay on board, and help as many people as you can come into the Kingdom, Jesus is coming.

Jesus continues: "Repent and Believe in the Gospel"

The gospel, the good news, includes repentance. The word Repent in Greek is "Metanoia". According to Bishop Barron, it is based on two words, "Meta" meaning - beyond and "Nous" meaning - mind. Thus in its most basic form it means, "To go beyond the mind that you have." Thus, at a fundamental level, to repent is more than just morally changing ones behavior, it is seeing and grasping reality in a new way.

Wikipedia states: Repentance (metanoia) called for throughout the Bible is a summons to a personal, absolute and ultimate unconditional surrender to God as Sovereign. Though it includes sorrow and regret for sin, it is more than that. In repenting, one makes a complete change of direction (180° turn) toward God.

Both definition fits well with Jesus announcement of the Kingdom of God. The question is, who is King? I know when I take over the rule of my life, when I loose site of the Kingdom of God, and instead get caught up in the kingdom of my own

making, I soon get lost. Lost in anger or pride or bitterness or comparison, lost in sin. Repentance is turning to God and recommitting your life, actions, heart, and thoughts to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Repentance is to accept once again, Jesus Kingly reign in our lives, trusting Jesus sovereignty. Humility is vital for true and lasting repentance.

This is not easy. I mentioned the peaceful transition of power our nation has experienced for over 200 year. Our transferring the power back to God in repentance can be a challenge. We are in a spiritual battle. The Enemy does not want us to repent. The Enemy does not want us to live in trust and surrender to God. Instead, the Enemy wants us to live in fear and to “save our own lives”. The world wants us to believe we don’t need God. We are better off being kings and queens of our own lives. Yet, this is contrary to God’s will and purposed for us. This is contrary to the Good News.

The truth is: our peace is found in living in, through and for Christ. Our peace is found in repentance, in having a mind above our typical mindset and living under the kingship of Christ. He is our peace, our hope, our forgiveness and life.

Moreover, Jesus summons us not only to repentance, but also to belief, **“Believe in the Gospel.”** To believe is to have faith in the Good News of Jesus. To acknowledge in our heart, soul, mind and strength that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We are called to believe that Jesus has won the victory. Believe in the forgiveness, love and mercy of God. Called to believe Jesus truly is God.

In the book of John we are told, “It is the will of God is that we believe in Jesus” (John 6:29). John goes on to say he wrote his whole book, “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). Jesus said, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

But Biblical belief is not something one does only with one’s mind. It is not only an assent of the mind. To believe, to have faith is to believe with one heart and mind, one’s soul and actions. To believe is to walk with Jesus – to follow Jesus. To love as He loves, to serve as He serves. To forgive as he forgives. In the Kingdom of God belief is both a grace (a gift from God) and a call to action.

This is why Jesus concludes his inaugural address by calling his first disciples saying, “come after me and I will make you fishers of men.” Simon and Andrew, James and John all left their nets and followed Jesus. They all believed and God helped their unbelief. They all saw in Jesus a seed that would grow, leaven that would change their lives, and a treasure so valuable they were willing to abandon everything to be a part of it. In their following, their faith grew. In their following, they embraced the Kingdom and the King. In their following, they became missionaries of the Kingdom of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ. As they heard Jesus call out to them on the shore, they knew it was their time, God’s Kairos time in them. They would never be the same.

Jesus not only gives his inaugural address. He inaugurates the first disciples and our discipleship as well. Pope Francis wrote in his book, *The Joy of the Gospel*, “In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him; what you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others” (p. 61).

Amanda Gorman, the youngest inaugural poet in US history concluded her compelling poem last week with these words:

**When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflake and unafraid
The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it**

Friends, The Good News is that Jesus is the light. In Christ the day is here, the Kingdom is now. We are called to repent, have the courage and humility to see it, go beyond our typical way of seeing. And believe, have the courage and humility (in, with and through Christ) to be it, to be Christ hands and feet, heart and voice to others - to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God to the world.

I will pray for you and I ask that you pray for me.

God bless you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Deacon Steve

