

**Imagine a special circumstance**

**Let's say the US was overrun by Canada**

**They destroy all rights of Americans**

**They are ruthless masters**

**They make Toronto the capital of the land**

**We are powerless**

**Then, Mexico invades and defeats them**

**They are a bit easier on us**

**But still keep us from acting freely**

**Toronto is no longer the capital**

**But it still holds a special memory**

**One that brings back deep resentment**

**This is our first reading**

**The Assyrians had captured Israel**

**Nineveh was their capital city**

**They were then overrun by the Babylonians**

**Things got a bit easier for Israel**

**But Nineveh still held a special contempt for them**

**Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh**

**Their enemy's capital**

**And he is to call them to conversion**

**He is reluctant**

**He tries to run away, refusing God's invitation**

**But eventually goes**

**He brings God's promise of destruction to his enemies**

**In 40 days you will be destroyed**

**Payback for years of persecution**

**He is ready to see them blotted from the earth**

**But the Ninevites do something unexpected**

**They believe him**

**They repent in sack cloths and ashes**

**God backs away from his punishment**

**He pardons them**

**And Jonah is crushed**

**He gets mad at God for not keeping his word to Jonah**

**For not destroying the Ninevites**

**He doesn't understand God's mercy**

**An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth**

**These are man's ways, not God's**

**God is ushering in a new way**

**And with Christ's entering the world**

**He turns the way of the world on its head**

**The old order is gone, the new order has come**

**The time of fulfillment**

**Not a specific year or chronological time**

**But a special time, a qualitative time, a new era**

**And it can be boiled down to one event**

**Jesus' resurrection**

**That is the one thing that changed Paul**

**It is the one thing that can change us**

**If we truly believe it**

**We are blessed to live in this time**

**The apostles were there at the beginning**

**When they were called**

**They had no idea what was to come about**

**They would experience the resurrection as it happened**

**We know the rest of the story**

**But it seems we often lose the sense of urgency the disciples had**

**Jesus approaching Peter and Andrew**

**Immediately they leave their boat and follow**

**James and John, mending nets**

**Getting ready for tomorrow's work**

**At his invitation, they leave it all behind**

**Becoming fishers of men**

**Like he did with his disciples**

**Jesus comes to us in the ordinariness of our lives**

**The apostles aren't in the Synagogue or on a retreat**

**They are at work**

**Sewing and cleaning the nets**

**Getting ready for the next day**

**The same thing they did the day before**

**The same they expected to do far into the future**

**Into this everyday life, Jesus enters**

**A simple invitation**

***Come after me***

**But if we accept it, as the apostles did**

**It changes everything**

**It changes how we see marriage and family**

**It changes how we see work and civil responsibilities**

**It changes our entire outlook**

**Because it is an invitation into *mentenoia***

**Conversion of heart and soul**

**It is not simply about living a moral life**

**Christianity is not only an ethical system or ethical imperative**

**It is not something reduced to reason**

**If that is what our Christian faith is, there is nothing to believe**

**It becomes all rational**

**If we can grasp it in our mind we can control it**

**It loses its fascination**

**And it loses the mystery**

**This is the time of fulfillment**

**This invitation of Christ is an invitation to a new outlook**

**It is an invitation into a world where death has been overcome**

**Where it is no longer a threat**

**What if everything we consider absolute and final is not?**

**Can I let go of these things?**

**As GK Chesterton said**

***As soon as I can see the world cannot make me perfectly happy***

***It can begin to make me happy***

**The Kingdom of God has begun**

**Not a political realm or moral code**

**God's new order is the resurrection**

**A revolution of mind and heart**

**A revolution that calls us to listen to Christ's invitation to me**

**To realize it is a personal invitation**

**Christ speaking to me, to every heart**

**Calling to me; inviting me to walk this path**

**And when I hear his invitation**

**Can I leave my nets behind and follow?**

**We all have so much in our lives that bind us, keeping us slaves**

**We all have jealousies, prejudices, conflicts, tensions in the heart**

**We cannot escape them by running off to Hawaii**

**Like trying to escape the cold and snow**

**The Europeans came to America seeking a new world**

**But they brought the old world with them**

**The old is in our hearts**

**So Christ invites us into a *mentenoia***

**A conversion that is so deep it impacts every aspect of our life**

**It is to see marriage and family in a new light**

**It is to see our work in a new light**

**Are we ready to leave the baggage behind?**

**The gossiping, the hatred, the deception, the greed, the anger**

**Whatever it is that is keeping us from God**

**Like the Ninevites**

**They repented and believed in Jonah's message**

**They never left Nineveh, and Nineveh was never the same**

**Lastly we are called to follow Jesus**

**This doesn't mean we have to move to Jerusalem and learn Aramaic**

**We don't have to grow a beard, wear sandals and a tunic**

**It means living a Christian life**

**Beginning in our families**

**With our spouse, our children and our parents**

**In our parish, our school and our places of work**

**It means taking a stand**

**Even when it is not politically correct**

**Striving for the protection of all human life**

**From conception to natural death**

**Standing up for the provisions of the just war theory**

**Taking care of the poor and marginalized**

**These are often put at odds with each other**

**But it is not an either/ or battle**

**But a both/ and approach that can unite**

**We stand up for marriage between one man and one woman**

**Calling ourselves and others to holiness and conversion**

**In whatever walk of life they are in right now**

**It means we are not defined by our consumption or material wealth**

**But by our relationship with God**

**A spiritual life that is lived in human interaction**

**Lent will be here before we know it**

**The invitation is here today**

***Repent, and believe in the Gospel***

***And come after me***