

Last week we spoke of various responses to God's call

When you read the whole story

Jonah's first response to God was a definite no

The part of the story we have today is more of the ok

But not yet variety

I think most are at least familiar with the premise of this story

Jonah's hand had been played

He had been called

He refused and tried running from God

But God pursued him

Calling again and again

Finally, Jonah finds himself at sea

A terrible storm hits and he is tossed overboard

He finds himself in the belly of a large fish for 3 days

Then spit out on the shores of Nineveh

This is where we find Jonah in our reading

Called to go to the city of Nineveh

Nineveh was a pagan city

Assyrians

The arch-enemies of the Israelite people

This city was the symbol of evil for the ancient world

And this was where God was sending Jonah

If caught, he would be punished severely

Perhaps even put to death

So we can understand his trepidation and reluctance

But the three days in the belly of the fish had changed him

Somewhat

He was still reluctant to be God's voice

But he goes

Beginning his trek through the city

Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed

Only a third of the way into the city

And something happens he could never imagine

The people listen

They proclaimed a fast

Clothe themselves with sackcloth

From the king down even to the animals

They believed God and repented

And seeing their actions

How they turned from the evil they were doing

God repents of His threat to destroy the city

Contrast Jonah's response to God's call and the 1st disciples

Theirs is an example of embracing the invitation

This was not their first exposure to Jesus

We heard last week they had spent time with him

Got to know him

It must have been quite a time

Now it seems they were going back to what they knew

Filling their lives with routine

A very normal human response

But things are changing

John had been arrested by Herod

His public life had come to an end

And now Jesus comes walking down the beach

The kingdom of God is at hand

Repent and believe in the gospel

This is the gospel

The good news

The kingdom of God is here now

Not coming at some point in the future

It is here now

So we see Jesus coming upon Simon and Andrew

They are casting their nets into the sea

Come after me and I will make you fishers of men

They had to know the dangers

What had happened to John

How the king had thrown him in jail

The leading Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to him

Yet they abandon their nets and follow

A bit further along

They come across John and James

They were in a boat mending their nets with their father

Jesus calls them

And they leave their father with the hired men

And follow him

Embracing the call

The invitation

Immediately

God doesn't wait for our lives to be in perfect order to call us

He calls in the midst of our work

In the midst of family life

**The people of Nineveh were not asked to leave their homes or
businesses**

They were not called to leave their families

They were called to repentance

They were called to a new life

Built within the structure of their old life

To place God first

And everything else in proper perspective

This is really our baptismal call

We are created for a specific purpose

Each of us is unique, and has a unique calling

I cannot do yours

You cannot do mine

And if I choose to run from my call

It will not get done

We have a purpose in this life

A purpose so much greater than our own happiness

Our own success and prosperity

Even bigger than our own salvation

These things come when we embrace our call

It is a call that is offered each day

Even if we initially turn away like Jonah

God is persistent

But it is His plan

To follow, we need to leave our nets behind

Nets that entangle, burden and ensnare our lives

And that is not easy

Because our nets grab us where we do not expect

When this country was founded

Many of our ancestors were seeking a new beginning

A fresh start

But what did they find here?

The conflict, the darkness the tensions were here as well

Because these things are within the heart

They do not disappear with a new physical location

They only disappear when we fix our eyes on Christ

Embracing his call

Are we ready to abandon our nets?

The gossiping, the deception

The prejudice and greed

The arrogance, egoism, resentments

All these and more

Entanglements that are no different from unbelievers

Are we prepared to follow Jesus?

To become Jesus to the world around us

This is much more difficult than picking up and moving to a new city

It is embracing his invitation

Today

St Paul warns us of this in our 2nd reading

The world in its present form is passing away

The time is running out

**This came home to me as I was speaking with a brother priest
just back from Hawaii**

He was there when the sirens blasted in the morning last week

He saw many people panicking

Trying to put children into manholes

Doing whatever they thought to protect their lives

For what purpose?

We are in the world

But not of the world

Are my choices and actions like the people of Nineveh before Jonah?

Or after Jonah?

Am I ready to embrace my baptismal call

Cutting our nets away like Simon, Andrew, James and John

To follow where he leads

This is the time of fulfillment

The kingdom of God is at hand

Repent, and believe in the gospel