

## **The Third Sunday before Advent**

*(Sunday between 6 and 12 November inclusive)*

### **Ordinary Time, week 32**

#### **Principal Service readings**

Jonah 3.1-5,10      Jonah proclaimed God's message and the people of Nineveh repented

Psalm 62.5-12

Hebrews 9.24-28      for mortals there is first death, then judgement; the sacrifice of Jesus is once and for all

Mark 1.14-20      Jesus proclaims the message and begins to call disciples

#### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

#### **Gospel Reading**

##### **Jesus begins to proclaim the message**

<sup>14</sup>After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

##### **Jesus calls the first four disciples**

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen.

<sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1.14-20 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

Jesus begins his ministry at a time when John has been imprisoned for preaching repentance and criticising immorality in public office (see Luke 3.19-20).

Jesus notes a new stage in history: 'the time is fulfilled' (v.15). In other words, the conditions are in place for the kingdom of God to come.

Mark uses the term 'kingdom of God' over a dozen times in his gospel. 'Kingdom' implies rule and authority, and a distinct country or area under that rule. What did the phrase mean to Mark and his readers? Where were they to find it? Who could belong to it? How could they join?

What does 'the kingdom of God' mean to us today? How can we tell if it has arrived? How can we belong to it? Will it ever really arrive fully? How?

The gospel or 'good news' is about what God has already done – 'the kingdom of God has come near' (v.15). However, there is a need for a human response: 'repent and believe' (v.15). Do you believe this message is still relevant today? How do people respond to it?

Repent means to 'turn around', to stop going in one direction and to go in the opposite direction instead; it is not a passive response, such as regret.

'Repent and believe ...' Is it possible to believe the good news without repenting? What difference does repenting make?

To what extent do you feel part of a community that accepts the authority of God, and lives under his rule?

The fishermen that Jesus comes across are not hanging around, waiting to follow Jesus, they are busy with their fishing. 'Fish for people' (v.17) – Jesus makes the fishermen an offer that they can understand in terms of their normal occupation; however, it is not literal. What could make them want to leave their work and homes and follow Jesus? Can you think of examples of people who have completely changed the direction of their lives when responding to God?

Being a fisherman is not the most obvious background for proclaiming the gospel. Can you think of any new skills or abilities that you, or other people you know, have acquired by stepping out in Christian ministry?

## Quotations

**1**

The preaching of the Gospel and its acceptance imply a social revolution whereby the hungry are fed and justice becomes the right of all.

Leo Jozef Cardinal Suenens 1904–96

**2**

The gospel to me is simply irresistible.

Blaise Pascal 1623–62

**3**

The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.

John Wesley 1703–91

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Discipleship; Repentance; Kingdom of God; Gospel

## Closing Prayer

God of steadfast love,  
you have announced the coming of your reign  
in the words and deeds of Christ your Son.  
Keep your Church faithful to his call  
to repentance and faith,  
that your word of forgiveness  
may be clearly spoken,  
and the hearts of many  
may be turned to you.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect for the Third Sunday before Advent, Year B<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals, Years, A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – Vol. 1 ; Ordinary Time. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004.*