**First Reading Jonah 3:1-5,10**

*The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah’s dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question “On whom should God have mercy?”*

1The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2 “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. 10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. Word of God, word of lif

**Psalm 62:5-12**

5 For God alone I wait in silence; truly, my hope is in God. 6God alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold, so that I shall never be shaken. 7 In God is my deliverance and my honor; God is my strong rock and my refuge. 8Put your trust in God always, O people, pour out your hearts before the one who is our refuge. 9Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath; those of low estate cannot be trusted. Placed on the scales together they weigh even less than a breath. 10Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride; though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it. 11God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, that power belongs to God. 12Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord, for you repay all according to their deeds.

**Second Reading 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

*Paul does not disapprove of marriage or other human social institutions. He does, however, want Christians to live in the present in fervent anticipation of God’s future, which even now has dawned through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

29Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as

though they had no possessions, 31and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

**Gospel Mark 1:14-20**

*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 with repentance and faith.*

14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom 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 people.” 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**SERMON**

Do you remember the days…when we were young and playing games in gym class or in our neighborhoods and two captains were chosen out of the group to pick teams. The experience was either exciting or excruciating. Either we were among the first couple kids picked because we were strong or tall or fast or athletic or we weren’t very coordinated at all and we were made to stand there and wait while the captains avoided choosing us. Some of us were left toward the end because we were girls, and everyone believed that boys were stronger and more athletic. Nevertheless, it was an early lesson that, in life, those considered the weakest or smallest or least coordinated would never be chosen, never be favored. If that was you, I’m sorry to have started out creating a sour mood…but just wait, because there is good news!

The good news is that Jesus came to usher in a way completely different from that approach. The truth is, God never considered the weakest or smallest or least coordinated to be unfavorable. Remember that just last week I talked about the story of the prophet Samuel. Samuel was only a boy when he was first given a word from God to be delivered to the priest

and his mentor, Eli. So, truth be told, God actually quite often chose the weakest, or smallest or least coordinated or least desirable to do God’s work.

The problem is that, quite often, this truth gets buried in the reality of how the rest of the world works. And sometimes people in power will attribute human understandings to the ways of God. It actually happens quite often when leaders allow politics to inform their faith rather than the other way around. They promote the inaccurate belief that God is on the side of the person or people who are greatest, most powerful, most desirable, by their standards. That is what happened in Jesus’ day. It continues to happen today.

But when Jesus came and announced, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news,” he was announcing that the time had come to clear up the misunderstanding or misappropriation of who God is. Through Jesus, humanity would have an experience of God that would correct that misunderstanding. First of all, God wasn’t expecting humanity to please God in order to have a relationship with God. The fact that Jesus came into the world to live among us demonstrates how much God desires relationship with a flawed and often unfaithful humanity. Second of all, God doesn’t look for the “best and brightest” so to speak or even the strongest or most commanding or those who are always right. The story in today’s gospel passage is the earliest example of this, at least in Mark’s gospel.

Let’s first understand something about the normal process of rabbis choosing disciples. It isn’t quite as traumatizing as being picked last for kickball, but there was a standard that had to be met. A rabbi…one who taught how to live out the Jewish Law…would be looking for a young person who was well-versed in the Jewish law and the prophets, who knew these writings inside and out. Those who were not suited to be disciples would learn a different trade, like carpentry or fishing.

But notice in today’s gospel passage that Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John are in the trade of fishing. That means that they were not good enough to be a rabbi’s disciples, they weren’t well-versed in the Jewish Law and prophets, didn’t know these writings inside and out. There was nothing wrong with doing a trade; we aren’t necessarily meant to infer that these men were poor or dumb. If they were good at their trade, then they may actually be quite successful. But they just weren’t suited, by human standards to be disciples of any rabbi.

But as I said earlier, Jesus was preparing to shake things up when he announced, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.” When Jesus called these fishermen to become his disciples, he did what no one else would ever do…he called those who weren’t good enough by any other rabbi’s standards, weren’t good enough by the standards of their day.

But God’s standards are different…God calls whomever God calls, and most often, God calls those who are weak by society’s standards, those who in whatever way do not live up to the standards of their day. It says throughout the Scriptures that God’s power is perfected in weakness. God works best through an imperfect, weak, unqualified humanity because then, when something cool happens, we see that it is not us, but God at work through us.

So, forget the sour mood that I caused by reminding you of your team-picking days. Today Jesus reminds us that God has chosen US! God hasn’t left you until last. God doesn’t choose all the “good” ones before you…God has chosen YOU! God chose YOU when Jesus came into the world to bring the kingdom of God near. God chose YOU when Jesus died on the cross to demonstrate the depths of God’s love for you and the power of God’s love over everything we think is most powerful. God, through Christ, calls YOU through your baptism to be a disciple, to let others know too that, on God’s team NO ONE is left until last, that they too are called into relationship with God, into this life of discipleship.

We are all loved by God and called by Jesus to be disciples. But we will all do that in different ways. And one way of living out discipleship is not better than another. I was called to live out my faith through being a pastor, but that calling is not better than being a teacher or a bus driver or a nurse or a waitress or a business owner or a sanitation engineer. It is also not better than being council president or a member of council or a staff person or a member of the church who volunteers or a member of the church who doesn’t have time to volunteer or someone who comes for worship but isn’t a member.

When Jesus calls people, he doesn’t call individuals into an isolated life, he calls people into a smaller expression of God’s family or team or community, however you want to think about it, so we can support one another and work together in this kingdom of God among us that is so very different from the world around us. The Spirit brings us together as God’s people, gathers us to hear and study the word of God, to receive the Lord’s Supper. The Spirit

inspires us to share what we have received as good news, to serve all people as Jesus served, to work for justice and peace for all God’s beloved people throughout the world. That may sound like a lot. But it is not up to us. It is up to God, through the risen Christ, at work in us and through us. Amen.