

## **An Invitation**

Psalm 62: 5-12

Mark 1: 14-20

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### *Psalm 62: 5-12*

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath. Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. For you repay to all according to their work.

### *Mark 1: 14-20*

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

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Immediately. Right now. Stop what you are doing, just drop it. Whatever you were doing pales in comparison to the importance, the urgency of why you have been summoned. Immediately. The urgency stirs our emotions—perhaps of fight or flight—perhaps of anxiety, fear or uncertainty. Something unforeseen, something unexpected, suddenly dominates everything you were doing, thinking, planning, and is quickly something that could be life altering, life impacting, life changing. It is the phone call in the midst of an otherwise normal day that tears you apart by the bad news you receive. It is the sudden call to evacuate or to shelter in place because of a nearby danger. It is the hasty announcement from the cockpit to stay seated with your seatbelt on as the air masks drop down. It is the abrupt dropping of the items in your hands at the UPS store to help catch an elderly man who has tripped and is falling. It is the sudden duck and cover as a line drive foul ball flies toward you along the third base line at Fenway Park. In these situations we respond as we need to, although the experience feels surreal, disconnected, and time may even seem to be moving differently.

Immediacy is all about urgency, speed. This is the time to act, and the time to think about it will come later. As the environmentalist movement has long said in their ecological work, “Act now, apologize later.” Immediacy is also about importance, about worthiness and value, for what we are being called to respond to.

For the times we must act or speak out of a sense of immediacy, we would not consider a career change or walking away from family and friends to be a wise sudden decision. It would feel irresponsible, impetuous, and wrong, yet we see very early in the Gospel of Mark that one single, simple and even witty sentence from Jesus had Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John as his first followers and disciples. “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

For Mark the telling of this particular moment embraces his importance of ‘now,’ with a sense of urgency and activity that wonders why anyone would delay in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ speaks, invites, and it is imperative that the only response is to drop everything to follow him immediately. There is much to do and precious time to do so everyone must act fast, must act quickly and decisively. Yet, as Paul Harvey used to offer us, there is a rest of the story.

The calling of the first four disciples is one of the few stories shared among all four gospels. Matthew essentially repeats Mark’s words, but it is Luke and John who add drama, conversation, details, and more importantly-history- so that we see and understand the faith, hope and mindset of these earliest disciples, and we can also hear the invitation for us as followers of Jesus Christ. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.....Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

Simon Peter and Andrew were fishermen, and they were also followers of John the Baptist. They had heard, accepted and followed his teachings. They had been baptized by him in the River Jordan. They knew that One was coming who was so powerful that even John felt unworthy to stoop down and untie his sandals. Now they waited, That’s all there was to do. They returned to what they knew—fishing in the Sea of Galilee. As they waited for good news that this powerful One had arrived, they instead heard the harsh, devastating news that John had been arrested and imprisoned for condemning Herod for adultery.

The time of waiting became a time of mourning. They were followers with no one to follow. Perhaps the words, or the sentiment, of the psalmist encouraged them, ‘For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.’ They needed the hope, the rock, the salvation, the fortress and the refuge that could only come from God.

In the midst of their fear and their grief, the One, Jesus, comes seeking them, knowing who they are, and more so, knowing who they will become. To all the other fishermen in the Sea of Galilee, they were just ordinary men who were carrying on the family business, but to Jesus, he saw who God had created them to be: Simon Peter, the rock of the church, and his brother Andrew who had introduced him to John the Baptist. James and John were so bold in their belief and actions that Jesus called them the ‘Sons of Thunder.’

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Immediately, as soon as Jesus offered the invitation. It was a wished for, hoped for, prayed for, invitation. The action to walk away from life as they had known it was an immediate one, but the mindset, the anticipation, the preparation, was all there. They knew who Jesus was—the long awaited Messiah, a rabbi, a teacher, a healer, a compassionate man, and they wanted to be a part of this journey and ministry.

Immediately. Right now. They stopped what they were doing as it paled in comparison to the importance, the urgency of why Jesus summoned them. Immediately. The urgency stirred their already jagged emotions of anxiety, fear and uncertainty for an opportunity they could only

have imagined yet now suddenly dominated everything they were doing, thinking, planning, valuing, in ways that were quickly life altering, life impacting, life changing.

In these times of anxiety, fear and uncertainty, of political and national strife, of pandemic surges, can we too hear Jesus' invitation, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.....Follow me and I will make you fish for people?"

One of the first things we learn from the earliest disciples is that Jesus does not choose his disciples because they are extraordinary, but because he is extraordinary. This is very comforting in our interview, assessment, audition-based, competitive world. The gifts, skills, talents and life purpose we each have is an open book to Jesus, and in the midst of ever changing and ever growing needs, we do need to act, respond, participate and pray immediately.

When Jesus called four fishermen, they were able to physically leave their boats and walk with Jesus, following him day and night. Jesus has called us to follow him day and night on a spiritual trail to live out the gospel. Can we do this immediately, without delay, hesitation or procrastination?

This is not always an easy call to follow. Peter, Andrew, James and John certainly showed us that truth. Yet we have been created for this and accepted this call in the waters of our baptism and the affirmation of our Confirmation.

The time is fulfilled, it was 2000 years ago, and it is today. The kingdom of God has come near, and we are participants. "Repent", Jesus said, reject the actions and habits that deny our calling from God. "Follow me," Jesus said. Have a relationship with Jesus, times of prayer and quiet, learn from him, lean on him. He is our rock and our salvation, the One in whom we trust and hope, and to whom we can pour out our hearts. And you will fish for people, you will open faith to others, as our lives show and tell our faith, our values and our beliefs.

Immediately he called them; and they followed him. Can we do the same? Whatever must happen ultimately should happen immediately. Amen.