



**Repent and believe
in the gospel.**

Mark 1:15

**January 24, 2021
Third Sunday after Epiphany
9:30 AM Worship**

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. – P.O. Box 218
Washburn, North Dakota 58577
www.flcwashburn.com

PRELUDE AND BELLS

AS WE GATHER

(The Lord always sets the right time for the right people to be used for His mission and purposes. Throughout the Old Testament, He spoke through prophets to proclaim His Word, call the people to repentance, and turn back into a relationship with Him. As His own beloved Son, our Savior, came into the world when the time was right, God used John the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ. As John's ministry and calling people to repentance would cease, and Jesus' earthly ministry began, Jesus echoed and perfectly fulfilled all that would come to fruition in and through Him. As Christ calls His first disciples, the call to repentance and faith continued. Even today, as we gather in His name, that same call through those the Lord has placed in His right time is heard with open ears and willing hearts within His Church, that we may live faithful lives of repentance and faith as we follow Him.)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES *Psalm 113:1–3*

P: Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD,

C: praise the name of the LORD!

P: Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!

C: From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION *Mark 1:15; Psalm 113:1–3*

P: Gracious Lord, by Your name You have called us Your own, and we are to pray, praise, and give thanks to You.

C: Yet we often do not live as You have called us to live as Your own. We do not always honor Your name nor Your calling with our praise.

P: We confess our sins to God in repentance, turning from those things that lead us away, turning back to You as we follow in faith.

Silence for reflection

P: Almighty and ever-compassionate Lord,

C: we are by nature sinful and unclean. We confess our many failures as we have not followed You joyfully and trustingly. We have not loved others as ourselves, and our thoughts, words, and deeds have not been pleasing to You. We have not always welcomed Your call for us to follow You and You alone.

P: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel. Hear and rejoice in the Good News. Jesus Christ died for you, and for His sake, God has compassion. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, and in His stead, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen. Thanks be to God!

P: Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD,

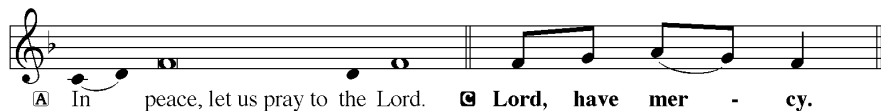
C: praise the name of the LORD!

P: Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!

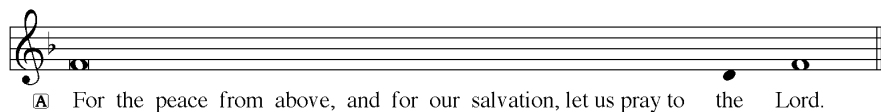
C: From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!

SPECIAL MUSIC Arden Wagner, Rick Richard
Peggy Moran, Wendy Miller
"You Servants of God"

KYRIE



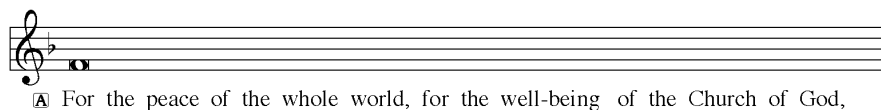
A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **G** Lord, have mer - cy.



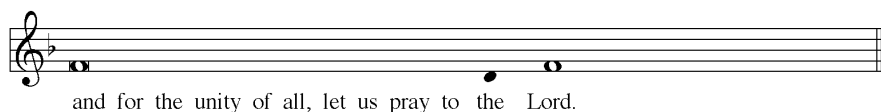
A For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



G Lord, have mer - cy.



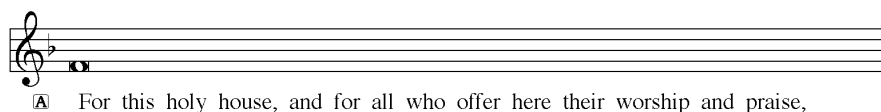
A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



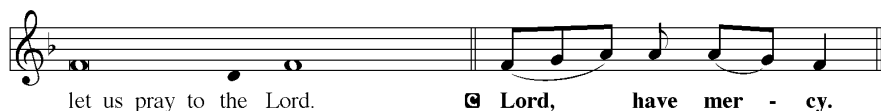
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



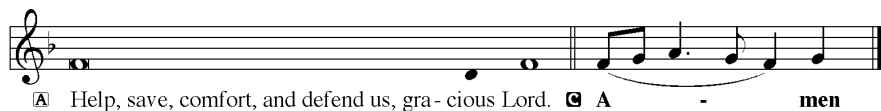
G Lord, have mer - cy.



A For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

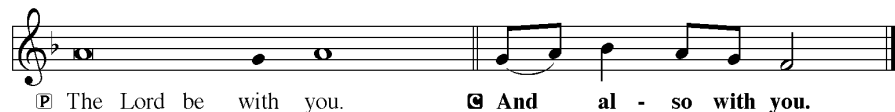


let us pray to the Lord. **G** Lord, have mer - cy.



A Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. **G** A - men

SALUTATION



P The Lord be with you. **G** And al - so with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

C: Merciful God, through the gift of your grace you call us to repentance, obedience, and eternal life. Transform us so that we are able to set aside all that might prohibit us from following your call to new life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING Jonah 3:1-5, 10
(The Small Catechism teaches us to pray the Lord's Prayer every morning and every evening, as we rise and retire. If not at those times, we pray his prayer on Sunday mornings. If we serve on a church committee, we probably close the meeting with that prayer. "How often we pray, "Thy will be done"! Yet, the Lord must make multiple efforts to get through to us. "Arise, go..." he says to Jonah and to us on more than one or two occasions. We keep praying for his will to be done. Will we respond to our own prayers?)

¹The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

PSALM.....Psalm 62
(God speaks once, though we may have to hear what he says multiple times before we trust in his word to us. We may trust his word the first time because "power belongs to the Lord." God is our salvation because he has determined to save us and has the power to accomplish his will. We may therefore, act with confidence on his word to us.)

¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.

² **Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.**

³ How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down—
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

⁴ **Surely they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.**

**With their mouths they bless,
but in their hearts they curse.**

⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.

⁶ **Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.**

⁷ My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

⁸ **Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.**

⁹ Surely the lowborn are but a breath,
the highborn are but a lie.

If weighed on a balance, they are nothing;
together they are only a breath.

¹⁰ **Do not trust in extortion
or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase,
do not set your heart on them.**

¹¹ One thing God has spoken,
two things I have heard:

“Power belongs to you, God,

¹² **and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”;**

**and, “You reward everyone
according to what they have done.”**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

(Oh, to be free from anxieties! It would seem that freedom from worries begins with listening to the Lord. If one listens to the world's many voices, other cares will begin to creep in to the day to day life. This world is in the process of disappearing altogether. Why would one be anxious about what is here today but gone tomorrow? So, Paul counsels divorce from worldly concerns so that the Lord will be given undivided attention.)

²⁹This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live 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 goods, 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. ³²I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. ³⁵I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

SPECIAL MUSIC Arden Wagner, Rick Richard
Peggy Moran, Wendy Miller
"Fishers of Men"

ALLELUIA

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL READINGMark 1:14-20

(Listening to God and giving him our undivided attention is a simpler matter when one truly believes that his kingdom is at hand. If running a business or even working for someone else's business is more important than the kingdom of God, our priorities are misplaced. The time is at hand for Christ's followers to expend more concern for the kingdom of heaven than for personal kingdoms—their own or another—on earth.)

¹⁴After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

¹⁶Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC Bell Choir

“Lord, I Lift Your Name On High”

SERMON Pastor Chuck Mann

SPECIAL MUSIC Choir

“Declare Your Makers Praise”

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Merciful Father,

C: we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

BENEDICTION *Psalm 113:2–3*

P: Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore!

C: From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised!

P: As the Lord sent His life-renewing Word through Jonah and the prophets, be assured of His forgiveness and love. As the Lord called and sent His apostles to be fishers of men, hear

His voice and follow Him. As we have received God’s grace this day for the sake of Christ our Lord, heed His call to repentance, rejoice in His forgiving grace, and give Him thanks and praise.

C: Amen.

P: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace
Numbers 6:24–26

C: Amen.

HYMN On next page
“We All Are One in Mission”

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

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Today’s Worship Leaders & Volunteers – Thank You!

PASTOR..... Pastor Chuck Mann
ACOLYTE Ashlyn Schmitz & Maeleigh Baumann
READER..... Kathy Keller
ORGANIST LeAnn Richard
USHERS/GREETERS Jon Sheldon & Dean Bergstedt
ALTAR GUILD Brenda Suckow & Steph Mann
SERVICE GROUP COORDINATORS Dean & Sonja Bergstedt

We All Are One in Mission

755

1 We all are one in mis - sion; we all are one in call,
 2 We all are called to ser - vice, to wit - ness in God's name.
 3 Now let us be u - nit - ed, and let our song be heard.

our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.
 Our min - is - tries are dif - f'rent; our pur - pose is the same:
 Now let us be a ves - sel for God's re - deem - ing Word.

A sin - gle great com - mis - sion com - pels us from a - bove
 to touch the lives of oth - ers with God's sur - pris - ing grace,
 We all are one in mis - sion; we all are one in call,

to plan and work to - geth - er that all may know Christ's love.
 so ev - 'ry folk and na - tion may feel God's warm em - brace.
 our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.

Text: Rusty Edwards, b. 1955
 Music: Finnish folk tune, 19th cent.; arr. Joel Martinson
 Text © 1986 Hope Publishing Co.
 Arr. © 1992 Augsburg Fortress

KUORTANE
 7 6 7 6 D

alt. tune: WEBB

Our Mission

“Working hand in hand to know Christ and make Christ known through Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, Fellowship, Caring Ministries, and Service.”

Welcome to all who have come to worship.

We gather to worship in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Welcome to all, dear family of Christ.

Visitors

We welcome all visitors to First Lutheran today.

Nursery

The nursery, located beside the narthex, is available for use for any parent feeling the need to use it during worship services with their child.

Prayer Requests

Kathy Solomonson, Mary Ann Beeks, Stephen Brundage Family on his death - Co-worker of Steph Mann, Josiah Johnson – Brother to Steph Mann, Greg Merrill – Uncle to Steph Mann, Wayne & Cindy Vorland – Parents of Aaron Vorland, Shauntaye & Oaklynn Kopecky – Kurle family member, Mary Schulz, Ross Lorentzen, Gwen DeMontigny, Sandy Nelson – Daughter of Marian Meyer, Kayla Boger – Family member of Steve & Peggy Wollmuth, Keith Hammerbeck – Family friend of the Kugler’s, Robert Walter – Former Professor of Pastor Chuck, Brian Hall – Related to Pastor Chuck, Deborah Davenport – Mother of Laura Gardner’s friend, Virgie Emineth, Cindy Delmonico – Mother to Melissa Kugler, Glenn Weist, Anna Belle, Ruby from Pine Ridge, Claire Boucher – Friends of Aaron & Lexie Solomonson newborn, Jamie Baumann, James Tolbert, Brad Taylor – Friend of Pastor Chuck, Taylor Gardner, Harold Holtz, Elaine Renfrow – Mother to Lynette Sondrol, Sandi Femling – Cousin to Melanie Beckman, Laren Holznagel, Harlow Tatum – Daughter to Brea (Gutknecht) Tatum, Melisa Chrest, Ruth Lund – Mother to Doddie Kuntz, Derek Laning, Jacklyne Carlson, John Krebsbach – Brother to Peggy Wollmuth, Arlo Omoth – Brother to Jeneen Loe, Shirley Nelson, Bob Miller, Rodney Jaeger

Thank you for your giving

Sunday, January 17th, Attendance – 91

Facebook Online Viewing - 163

General Fund & Plate Giving - \$2,126.00

Pastoral Care

Please call Pastor Chuck if you or a loved one are in the hospital or know you will be going to the hospital. The church does not usually get informed of your stay by any of the hospitals even if you are registered under our congregation's name. We want to make sure you get pastoral care. Thank you!

Steph Mann Phone Number

Please check to make sure you have the correct phone number for Steph Mann. It is 701-891-9413. If you are not getting replies back from her it may be that you have the wrong number that was published earlier.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting for FLC will be today following the worship service in the sanctuary. If you are a confirmed and giving member of First Lutheran, you are considered a voting member and encouraged to attend this meeting to show your support of your church!

Sunday School & Bible Study

Due to the annual meeting, there will be no Sunday school or Bible Study today.

Quilting

Women! Do you enjoy quilting or would like to learn to quilt along with some fellowship time? If you answered yes to either of those, please join us this Thursday and Friday, January 28th & 29th, from 9:00 am – noon in the fellowship hall.

FLCW

FLCW Executive Board will meet next Sunday, January 31st, following the worship service in the fellowship hall.

Jean Sunday

Next Sunday, January 31st, is Jean Sunday. If you wear jeans to church that Sunday, consider donating a \$1 or more to FLY to help with expenses for activities throughout the year. Even if you don't wear jeans you are still welcome to donate. A jeans can will be on the table with the offering plate.

Secret Prayer Partner Tea

The Secret Prayer Partner Tea will be held on Sunday, February 14th, at 2:00 pm. If you would like your name removed from the list or would like your name added to the list, please let Jeannette know in the church office no later than February 11th. If you plan to be at the tea, please call Donna at 315-0275 or Judy at 220-4410 by February 7th.

Mailboxes

Please check your mailbox in the narthex. Your 2020 contribution statement, 2021 FLCW Books and 2021 offering envelopes are in your mailbox in the narthex for those that have not already picked theirs up. If you do not see a mailbox for yourself, please talk to Jeannette in the church office during office hours to have one made for you. Every member should have one! Your box is the one under your name.

Technology Special Committee

-Mission/Objective: The technology special committee will evaluate current technology resources such as: (program & equipment), use of social media platforms and will make recommendations to the council for better ways to use technology in the future. (Areas to be included but not limited to, FLC website, administration software, Social networking, audio/visual email, network etc.)

We are looking for 1 more younger committee member to join us to help guide meeting the above objective. Meetings will be held once per month possibly beginning in February 2021. We would especially like church members of varying ages to get varying opinions from youth all the way up to our most senior members who would like to help us! Please talk to Pastor Chuck with questions or to volunteer!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

- ⇒ **Class:** We are looking at how many would be interested in a class to be scheduled in the future in learning how to knit or crochet. Please contact Jeannette and specify which you would like to learn and stay tuned for time/date TBA.
- ⇒ **Distribution of Shawls:** There will be a sheet located on top of the prayer shawl box. It will have a place for the *name of the person taking the shawl, number of shawls being taken and the recipient*. You do not need to fill out all of it, please at least fill out the number so we know how many shawls we have been able to provide. If you would like us to add the recipient to the prayer chain, please include the name.

Kitchen Items

Please check the church kitchen and see if you are missing any of your kitchen items from home. Some of the bowls, pots, pans, etc. have been there for over a year. If you took food to the Mann household, your dishes were brought to the church for you to pick up. Items not claimed by March 1st will be given a chance for a free-will offering or given to the McLean County Resource Center.

Call to Prayer

Our missionary, Ruby from Pine Ridge is calling on all congregations near and far and the reservation to join in an hour of prayer where you are on Sunday, January 31, 1-2 pm. Please join in this time for unity and for our Nation.

Clapping During Worship

At FLC, we are so blessed with many gifted musicians that have been so willing to share their gift of music during this unprecedented time of change due to COVID-19. We are especially thankful for their time and energy to share their beautiful music with us each week. To help focus our hearts and minds on Jesus, please refrain from *clapping* during the service as their special music is taking place of the hymns in the normal liturgy of the divine service. The musicians understand that in reverence to God, it is their honor and service to God and congregation to bless us with their harmonious music.

Reminder

Bulletin deadline is noon on Thursday's unless otherwise stated in the bulletins.

First Lutheran Church Update as of November 17, 2020 regarding Orders from ND Governor's Office and ND Dept. of Health:

As a religious organization, the FLC executive committee has reviewed the subject COVID 19 related materials, and in prayerful consideration we are moving forward with the following guidelines:

Church Services - in-person

- Facemasks will be required in accordance with the Governor's/State Health Officer's orders
 - Masks must be worn when *entering* or *exiting* the sanctuary. Please bring your own mask if able, if you do not have one available, the church will continue to provide disposable masks barring any supply/availability issues.
 - This does not apply to those who are exempt from ND health order, such as those with medical conditions, children 4 years old and under (children under 2 years old should never wear face coverings), etc.
- Social distancing will be observed, by family unit (maintaining six feet apart).
 - Pews will remain in usual position to allow for the most space per family unit
- Circumstances where mandatory face coverings may be temporarily removed (from state health officer order part 6) that are applicable to our services
 - Pastor Chuck (or others using mics up front) while socially distant in leading the service
 - Musicians to play instruments (as long as they are able to be socially distance)
 - While a family unit is sitting in the pew during the service when social distancing is possible
- After the service has finished, please fellowship outside for adequate space for social distancing.

Sunday School/Confirmation/Other small group activities held at the church

- All small groups are still welcome to meet
- Facemasks will be required when attending any of these activities at the church
- To accommodate more families to come see the Sunday School Christmas Program safely, we will be splitting the program into two separate programs with 20 minutes in-between, more information on this coming soon!

All previous guidelines remain in place:

- Every family is encouraged to attend church, Sunday school, or other activities in the manner that they feel most comfortable (whether on-line or in person)
- Hand sanitizer is available at multiple locations within the church.
- No food is to be prepared in the kitchen at this time, and there will be no coffee hour.
- The FLC website (www.flcwashburn.com) and Facebook will be updated as we continue to monitor the situation and any new developments. Please check these sites for updates or concerns. If you do not see an answer to your concern, please feel free to reach out to Pastor Chuck or Jeannette.
- If you are joining online and would like the Sacrament of Holy Communion, please contact Pastor Chuck.

“May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

THIS WEEK AT FIRST LUTHERAN

TODAY	9:30 AM	Worship Annual Meeting Following Worship in Sanctuary
	<u>NO</u>	Sunday School
	<u>NO</u>	Bible Study Led by Alexis Solomonson
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting AI-Anon Meeting
TUES.	8:00 AM	Men's Bible Study
	10:00 AM	Mommy's Group
WED.	9:30 AM	Friendship Bible Study
	6:15 PM	Confirmation
	6:45 PM	Bell Choir
	7:15 PM	FLY
	7:30 PM	Choir
THURS.	9:00 AM	Quilting
FRI.	9:00 AM	Quilting
SAT.	4:00 PM	Private Baptism
SUNDAY	9:30 AM	Worship
	10:45 AM	Sunday School Bible Study Led by Alexis Solomonson
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting
	7:00 PM	AI-Anon Meeting

COMMUNITY AND AREA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Camp of the Cross Ministries is hosting a **MEN'S ONE DAY RETREAT** at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Bismarck, January 30, 2021, from 9 am – 3 pm. Cost is \$25 per person which includes the program, breakfast, lunch and snacks. Registrations preferred by January 25th for a food count. It will be awesome and relevant! AND NO, you don't need to be an expert in the Bible! There will be some "cool" leaders! Contact Janis at director@campofthecross.com or call 701-337-2246.



Table Talk

The Third Sunday After Epiphany

January 24, 2021

Mark 1:14-20

“...immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Vs. 18



Decision time, folks! Jesus has commanded you, “Follow me!” Your obedience is imperative. Simon and Andrew obeyed, immediately! James and John obeyed, immediately! You, too, must obey, immediately! Lest you think this is an uncharacteristic endorsement of decision theology, it is not. These disciples Jesus called did not make a decision “to believe” in Jesus. They simply obeyed. The four of them got up and followed Jesus.

The time is long past when Jesus walked around in a tunic and sandals, confronting people with his orders. Nonetheless, his command, “Follow me!” still resonates among us. While it is no longer possible to follow Jesus as did Simon and Andrew and James and John, it is possible to be in his physical presence because his body, the church, is present yet. It’s just around the corner. You’ll find it wherever God’s Word is preached as the pure gospel and where the sacraments are administered in accordance with that gospel. To hear Jesus’ command today is to hear the “Follow me” as the command, “Get yourself into my presence! Go to church!” Without your obedience to that command, you will not believe.

So, you have obeyed, you’re in the presence of Jesus’ body, and now the Word and Sacraments are the instruments through which the Holy Spirit engenders faith within you. The coming of that faith brings several realizations. Faith reveals that, before the moment of the Holy Spirit’s work, you hadn’t really believed in Jesus; the Good News must be “new” for it to be “good” (Lam. 3:23). Faith reveals that your obedience in answering Jesus’ call, “Follow me,” is merely a dead work. It has no life in it. From the perspective of the New Creation where faith in Christ has delivered you (2 Cor. 5:17), all your obedience—even the obedience that got you to this place where faith is possible—is of the old, passing away creation. It is dead! Faith’s revelation of your obedience as a dead work humbles you, for it strips you of everything you value and leaves you nothing but Jesus—that is, your nothingness in faith gives you everything in Jesus! With a promise like this, what are you waiting for? Get up! Get yourself to that place where faith is possible!

Table Talk: Discuss the distinction between decision theology and obedience to Jesus’ command.

Pray: Heavenly Father, open my ears that I may obey; open them even wider that I may believe. Amen

Written by Rev. Timothy J. Swenson

Dean of Chapel for the Institute of Lutheran Theology



www.ilt.edu • PO Box 833 • Brookings, SD • (605)692-9337

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Third Sunday after the Epiphany - January 24, 2021

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people. And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” – Mark 1:17-18

I remember the day I told my parents as if it were yesterday. I was excited, nervous, and anxious to get it over with. After all, how exactly does one tell their parents they are going to spend the rest of their life serving God in ministry? In my case, at that time, in the convent. My mother cried, and they were not tears of joy. My dad was just silent on the other end of the phone, and when he finally did speak, he said, “YOU? A NUN?”

How naïve I was to think that this call from God was something people would embrace and rejoice over. Little did I understand their apprehension. I thought it was because they thought I was too young, or too unsettled, or maybe just not good enough. But this call from God was not of my choosing, and it wasn't something I could just simply ignore, because when God calls us, His voice doesn't just go away. We can run, but we can't hide.

Today's first lesson from Jonah proves my point. He DOES try to run from God because he doesn't like the people he was being called to, and so he split. But God caught up with him and used him anyway, and the people of Nineveh heard God's word of repentance and were saved.

The disciples are called in Mark's text today to become fishers of people. Now, while it's true that they left immediately and followed him, it's later on in their ministry that they have troubles with their commitment, and they all eventually abandon Jesus in his most needy time. Why? Because following God is a tough and messy business. It's difficult on the best of days, and downright terrifying on the worst. Maybe that's why my mom cried when I told her, and my dad was in disbelief. Perhaps they didn't think I could be strong enough for what lie ahead. And they are right. None of us can be strong enough for what God asks of us. We would be foolish to think otherwise. But, when God calls us, he also gives us all that we need to do His work here on earth.

Have you ever noticed your name in the church directory? It's there because you are a part of your congregation and its ministry. In fact, you, too, have been called. Called to live out your Baptism. Called to share your gifts. So, what do you say? Want to go fishing?