

3RD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 01/21/18

Mt. Calvary, West View / Pentecost, Avella

JONAH 3: 1-10, I CORINTHIANS 7: 29-35, MARK 1: 14-20

Theme: Before Twitter: The Original Call to Follow

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is taken from the Gospel of St. Mark, the 1st chapter:

“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

Kids are all a-twitter about this twittering thing. If you are doing the twitter, then you need no introduction to this strange new world. But for those of us who have not tweeted a tweet to a twit, here is a summary breakdown. Twitter is an online news and social networking service where users, that wished to disseminate information once posted bills upon various objects of wood with nails, such as a door, or a utility pole, or a wall, now post and interact with messages called tweets. On the one hand, it is quick and easy to get the information that you wished to get from you to others. Just type and send and presto-pringo, it has now reached the far corners of the socialized world, as long as there is electrical power to be tapped. On the other hand, once it is out there, it is impossible to retract. You can try, but once one person has it, everybody has it.

Which is the point of today's sermon title. For in order to make twitter work, you have to sign up to be a "follower." Now how does one get a following? No matter how you look at it, you get followers by begging. You can argue till you are blue in the face, but the fact remains that when someone wants to have people follow their tweets, they have to beg for them to follow. It can be as simple as putting out a tweet and hoping that people will want to hear what you have to say, which is in itself a hope, a plea, a beg. Perhaps they are super famous and assume that people will want to follow their tweeting, but again, their desire that people will drop what they are doing and respond to the tweets with their own tweets, is not a guarantee, but an assumption, an arrogant

form of hope, which is itself, a preemptive begging. Their hope is, “If you love me and look up to me as an idol, American or not, then follow my tweets! Make sure the notifications is on so you won’t miss that 3am tweet from Club Cabana about which drink I am consuming with which ingredient mix I have concocted.” Because, of course, we cannot *live* without *this* information!

Jesus does not have to beg to get people to follow Him. He simply speaks. It is the Word alone that moved these followers. Jesus did not have rock-star status to draw them; He did not have political savvy to attract them; He did not have mass movements of admirers to herald His presence – at least not like He had when He was born. Jesus was simple and direct, “***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.***” This message of the kingdom that we have been long waiting for, has now come! God is with us, the King of Kings is gathering His people to Himself! His recompense is near, simply repent and believe, the Gospel!

This is the simple message we have been preaching for 2,000 years as the body of Christ! It is the Message that conservative Lutherans have been preaching for over 500 years! The same Words, the same approach, the same simplicity. Yet, if this is true, then why haven’t we had the same success? Jesus spoke to Simon and his brother, Andrew, “***Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.***” Yet when we speak about the coming end, no one wants to hear us. Jesus must have had more than just a word. Well, what about Jonah? Jonah was told to arise and go to the heathen nation of Nineveh, and declare unto them a disturbing message, “***Yet, in forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown!***” Three days it takes to get through this great city, and yet, in less than that, the message traveled throughout, and every person – even the great king – believed. *Jonah* – wait, not Jonah, but God! They believed God!

The followers of Christ are not followers of man, but of God! It is God’s Word that moves the hearts of the people, ready to repent and believe. If your evangelism is ineffective, is it possible

that you are relying on your words, your interpretation, your desire to be followed and not the Words of God? It is the human sin that makes us desire people to follow us because we know what we are doing; we know we are right; we know what is best for everybody. Yet the Kingdom is increased not because of our work, but God's work. You and I cannot make the Word of God more palatable, the Word works itself through the workings of the Holy Spirit. So when we start to notice that our ego, our desire to make people listen to us, our need to increase in self image is getting in the way of the simple message of forgiveness and Salvation through the Cross of Christ alone, we need to stop, repent, and let God do His Work in making followers.

Jesus promised Peter and Andrew that if they would Follow Him, He would make them become fishers of men. Sometimes, when we are fishing, we catch nothing. Hey, It happens. Even Jesus was not able to convince the rich young ruler to follow Him, but that is why Jesus came preaching the good news. The Rich young ruler had been so enslaved to his sins that he did not want to follow Jesus. Jesus came to remove those sins from us with the death and dying on the cross so that man might be saved through the blood shed necessarily for Salvation. Jesus truly does love you and gave His life for you, and because He has saved you by faith alone, there is no more need to try and earn a spot in the good gracious of God, but by faith alone, believe and simply follow.

The message needs to be out there, and you are the new fisher-people! And since you were bought with a price, I guess you can say you are fisher-price-people. You are the new creation through your baptism that makes you believe the message that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and desire to preach said message to all to believe, for as Paul declares, *“the appointed time has grown very short.”* Now the rest of this pericope may seem a bit convoluted, but it is quite understandable in light of the message of Christ. The Word of God is simple, and direct, and straight-forward. It needs no flowery language to dress it up, nor does it need extravagance to make it more attractive.

Liberace needed that, not God's Word of repentance. So do not think you need to change who you are to get the message across, but be urgent in the message. We have very little time to get the message out to people. Jesus had three years of ministry before He went to the cross, and rose again to prove that message and win for you your eternal inheritance that makes you a forgiven child of the Heavenly Father. Jonah preached a 40 day window of repentance. You and I have no such luxury. The time is short, and the message is not effective if we are distracted by earthly things. So no more mourning, brighten up! No over-exuberance, tone it down! Do not worry about where you are going and what you need for all this is passing away. The message is all that is important to make more followers of Jesus. The messenger is immaterial, the message eternal.

Jesus preached the Word; that is all that is asked of you. It is all He asked of Jonah, it is all He asked of Paul. It is all He asked of Andrew, Peter, James and John, and it is all He asks of you. He asks this, not to curry His benevolence, not to earn a spot near the throne of God, but simply because you have received the kingdom in your baptism, received the forgiveness from the cross of Christ in His sacrament of body and blood. You believe the Gospel message that Jesus saves you. So, fear not the people that will not click ölikeö to His message; simply preach the Word. It is the only way for others to hear and believe. In His most Holy Name we pray. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+

Offering / Prayers

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment.