

A reading from the book of the prophet Jonah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying,
“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city,
and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”

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.

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk.

And he cried out,

“Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

And the people of Nineveh believed God;

they proclaimed a fast,

and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When 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.

Nineveh = NIN-uh-vuh

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters,
the appointed time has grown short;
from now on,
let even those who have wives be as though they had none,
and 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,
and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.
For the present form of this world is passing away.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – B 3

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord

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 fishers of 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.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The Book of Jonah is not a normal prophetic book consisting of the prophet's oracles in poetic form. Ostensibly it is a prose narrative about the activity of the prophet himself. In reality, however, it is a kind of tract (almost a propagandist historical novel like those of Dickens or Kingsley), intended to put across the author's universalistic views as protest against the narrow nationalism of postexilic Judaism.

The unknown author has used as the basis of his tale a saga that had grown up around the figure of the prophet Jonah mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.

The first part of his work (chs. 1-2) concerns the prophet's unsuccessful attempts to escape from the task YHWH imposed upon him, namely, preaching to the Ninevites. The prophet thought that God could not possibly care for such Gentiles as they were!

The story of Jonah in the belly of the great fish occurs in this part and represents YHWH's refusal to let the prophet run away from his mission. He was rescued at sea in order to preach.

Our passage comes from the beginning of the second part (chs. 3-4), where Jonah carries out his preaching of repentance to the Ninevites.

Jesus used Jonah's ministry as a type of his own but claimed that with him something (sic: neuter) greater was present, namely, the presence of the kingdom (Luke 11:29-30).

Matthew gives a different interpretation of this typology, taking Jonah's sojourn in the fish for three days and three nights as a type of Christ's resurrection. Since our passage comes from the second part of Jonah, only the former typology is relevant to its interpretation.

This is also indicated by the correspondence between this reading and the gospel, which provides a summary of Jesus' eschatological preaching. Jonah is thus presented to us in today's liturgy as a type of Christ in his preaching of the kingdom.

Responsorial Psalm: 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9*

A different selection of verses of this psalm was used on the twenty-sixth Sunday of the year in series A and received comment there. Both Jonah and Jesus figure today as preachers of repentance.

But repentance must be followed by obedience to the will of God, a point not featured in the Jonah story (nothing is said about the Ninevites' subsequent behavior) but strongly emphasized in the gospel, where Jesus' preaching of repentance is followed by the call of the disciples.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

In 1 Cor Paul has been dealing with problems of sex and marriage that the Corinthians had raised in a letter they had written to him. He concludes the first part of his answer with a general discussion about the Christian attitude toward the world, which for him is determined by his expectation of an immi-

ment parousia. In view of this, Paul recommends living in the spirit of *hōs me* (“as if not”), that is, in a spirit of detachment from the world.

It would be tempting to dismiss Paul’s injunction of detachment as no longer relevant now that the expectation of an imminent parousia has been abandoned. But his injunction still has existential validity, for it is still true that the form of this world is passing away. All its structures and relationships are provisional and must not be treated as if they were ultimate.

They are only penultimate values, not because this world is unreal, in a Platonic sense, but because as a result of the Christ-event, the kingdom of God has become a present reality awaiting its consummation. Our Lord taught the same eschatological detachment in the Sermon on the Mount when he enjoined his disciples to seek first the kingdom of heaven.

It may sound a little brutal to apply this counsel even to marriage, but even the marriage relationship is only penultimate, for in the consummated kingdom of God “they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt 22:30).

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

The Matthean parallel to this pericope—the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in Galilee and the call of the first disciples—was used on the third Sunday of the year in series A. Mark’s version lacks the formula quotation from Isa 9:1-2 (“The land of Zebulun and Naphtali”), which was highlighted in the caption and the short form of the Matthean gospel.

The absence of the quotation thus calls attention to Mark’s summary of Jesus’ preaching, a point that is further emphasized by the caption here and by the selection of the passage from Jonah for the Old Testament reading.

As we have just noted, this summary is “compositional,” that is, composed by Mark himself. To some extent Mark has picked up the missionary language of the Hellenistic Church (“believe in the gospel”) and of the earliest post-Easter period (“The time is fulfilled”).

But the central phrase (“the kingdom of God is at hand”) undoubtedly reproduces Jesus’ own message (see Q-Matt 10:7 par.; also Q-Matt 12:28 par.).

The exhortation to repent was part of Jesus’ message and was taken over by him from John the Baptist, though with somewhat different overtones. John’s message was that God was to act soon.

Jesus’ message is that God is beginning to act eschatologically—with his own appearance—and will consummate that action in the not too distant future. This implies that “the time is fulfilled,” that is, that the event to which the Old Testament looked forward is now beginning to happen.

The challenge to repent, therefore, means much more than to be sorry for one’s individual sins. The Greek word for “repent” is *metanoiein*, which literally means “to change one’s mind.”

But Jesus must have used the Hebrew *shûbh*, or its Aramaic equivalent, which means to turn around 180 degrees, to reorient one’s whole attitude toward YHWH in the face of his coming kingdom. It therefore includes within it the demand of faith.

So Mark's addition of "believe in the gospel," despite the later missionary origin of this particular language, brings out the force of Jesus' challenge to repent. This is how it differs from John the Baptist's use of the same word.

It is important to remember that Mark is not summarizing Jesus' preaching simply out of historical interest. He places this summary as a kind of title to his whole connected account of Jesus' ministry.

"Gospel" is the characterization that Mark gives to his whole work (see Mark 1:1), which includes Jesus' way to the cross and, beyond that, his resurrection. It is in this whole story that the kingdom or reign of God draws near and is inaugurated, and will surely be consummated.

The call of the disciples that follows serves to illustrate what it means to repent and believe in the gospel. It does not mean to accept certain timeless truths but to be attached to the person of Jesus, to go along with him in his way—a way that will lead to the cross, as will become clear at Caesarea Philippi.

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