

Bible Study for Sunday January 24, 2021

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Jonah 3:1-5 & 10
- Mark 1:14-20

Opening Question: What does “repentance” mean to you? How does one know if repentance is sincere? How necessary do you think it is to repent before one can receive God’s forgiveness?

Jonah 3:1-5 & 10 The 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.” ³So 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. ⁴Jonah 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.

Has God ever called you to serve someone you didn’t like or even hated?

The Assyrians were fierce enemies of the Israelites, as the Assyrians had conquered and oppressed them 200 yrs before this story. Also, the Israelites saw Nineveh as an abhorrent place of sinful behavior (think Las Vegas at its worst). Were the Assyrians deserving of God’s mercy? Was Jonah? Why do you think Jonah was so upset that God would forgive them?

Jonah didn’t show his bias by actively doing something hateful. Instead, he showed his prejudice passively – by not going, and by withholding part of God’s message.

Is there anyone you, our church, or the Christian church tends to exclude? The difference might not be racial – it might be based on social status, employment, religious beliefs, or even different Christian practices. Thoughts?

How hard must it have been for the Jews to learn that God’s love was for everyone, even the Assyrians?

Mark 1:14-20

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.

In this text the verbs for “repent” and “believe” are ongoing actions – to be continually performed. Is this what we normally think of these actions?

Jesus’ invitation to follow in this passage is immediately preceded by a command to repent and believe in the Good News. The Greek word for repent is *metanoia*, which means more accurately “to turn around.” In this way, this passage connects the life of faith to a life of particular movement—turning, following, coming or moving forward.

- Does this language of movement resonate with your life of faith?
- We don’t seem to talk about the “repentant life” much in our Lutheran tradition. What does a repentant life look like to you?
- How can a congregation best teach and promote a repentant life in today’s world?

Why would the disciples drop everything to follow someone they just met? What would your opinion be of someone who did the same thing today? Why?

How was Jesus’ calling of these men (v. 17) a reworking of their original profession?

James and John were with their father in the boat, “mending their nets.” Many of us are working, day after day, to “mend our nets” so that we can continue going after the same catch.

- Is it easier to “mend our own nets” as opposed to casting new nets in different (and unknown or uncertain) directions?
- What might casting new nets look like for our SOH community?