

Third Sunday After Epiphany
January 22, 2023

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God’s grace and mercy.

Greeting

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who makes all things new,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God’s mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,
**we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,
and cannot free ourselves.
We have not practiced your righteousness.
Our hearts have turned away from you.**

**For the sake of the world you so love,
forgive us,
that we may be reconciled to one another
for the glory of your holy name.**

Amen.

Thus says our God:

“The former things have come to pass
and new things I now declare.”

God’s mercy makes us new.

We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Shine, Jesus, Shine”

#671

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

¹There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the LORD] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.”

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Just a week ago we heard a similar story from the Gospel of John. Jesus was approaching the Jordan as John is standing along the river with two of his disciples. As John always did he proclaimed the coming of the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” John’s disciples were curious, they followed Jesus for a bit, and then we get the exchange that ends with the disciples wanting to see where Jesus abides.

In John’s Gospel that is the calling of the first disciples.

This Gospel text is Matthew’s account. Jesus walking along the shore sees fishermen in a boat and calls to them, “follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

What seems like 2 different tellings of the same story, and the confusion of having multiple tellings of the Jesus story with an unclear timeline doesn’t help here, but if we take a look at some of the context clues we start to get a clearer picture.

One thing that we know is that the characters are the same in each of the stories. We have Jesus, John, Simon (Peter), and Andrew. In John’s Gospel Simon and Andrew are mentioned as John’s disciples before they start following Jesus. John tells them that Jesus is the one they want to follow. And they do. And they stay with him for a while and enjoy what sounds like a wonderful meal.

In Matthew’s gospel, our text for today, we hear that John has been arrested.

“¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:”

These disciples were disciples of John. He has been arrested. In their fear, grief, and unknown of what comes next they return to what they know best. They return to where they find comfort. They return to their fishing boats.

And Jesus spots them as he passes by the sea. He recognizes them, it seems, as the disciples of John that he has previously met.

“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”

Jesus speaks into their comfort and complacency and calls them to follow him.

What is fun about Gospel writers is that they each had their own narrative that they wanted to meet within their telling of the Jesus story. Luke is very social justice oriented. John is all about God making a home in the world, and fleshing out what “the world” actually means.

One of the themes of Matthew is seen if we look into the original Greek in which these stories were written, and it is in these instances that we are grateful for scholarly footnotes in our Study Bibles.

In mentioning the prophetic texts from Isaiah that Jesus is fulfilling by returning to Galilee, it states that he is returning to “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Historical background tells us that Jews and Gentiles didn’t necessarily come together. There was a definite division between them.

Fast forward to the end of Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus gives his disciples the Great Commission before leaving them he says, “go and make disciples of all nations...”

The word that is used for *nations* is the same word that is used for *Gentiles*.

Why does this matter?

It tells us that Jesus, in calling the fishermen to “follow me and I will make you fish for people” is saying that to follow Jesus is to follow across boundaries and other barriers that the world would tell them exist.

To follow Jesus is to tear down those things that separate us from the other and live into the fullness of following Christ.

The “come and see” in John’s gospel was an invitation to see what could be as Jesus people.

The “follow me” in Matthew’s gospel is an invitation to come and be a part of it and make happen that which you have seen could be.

The beauty of this for us is that we realize, in putting these stories together and create a better idea of some sense of chronology, is that even Jesus disciples who, if we only read one gospel we think they follow immediately, actually have a couple of experiences (that are recorded in these books) before they do actually “leave their nets and follow him.”

We so often tell ourselves that we need to take the “drop everything immediately and follow Jesus across every division imaginable...”

When the reality is that even his first disciples had to have a few encounters before being fully committed. They had to “come and see” and experience life with Christ before answering the follow me.

But Jesus doesn’t give up on them. He doesn’t see them in the boat and think of them as those disciples of John who had the Jesus experience but returned to John anyways.

No. He calls them out of their comfort, speaking into their confusion of what comes next, and says “follow me.”

Thanks be to God. AMEN

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.**

Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Make your church one in purpose, proclaiming the message of the cross. Help us to work together across differences. Energize ecumenical partnerships, including the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We rejoice at the bounty of your creation. Fill the land and sea with your abundance. Bless harvests in the southern hemisphere and fallow fields in the northern hemisphere. Equip farmers to till and keep the earth sustainably. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

In Christ your reign comes near and calls all to repentance. Break the rod of the oppressor in every nation. Dispel the shadow of death in places of war and persecution. Grant us leaders who lift the yokes that burden those in need. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Be a stronghold for those in trouble and a rock for all who are afraid. Rouse communities to care for neighbors who need shelter, are facing maltreatment, or are isolated and lonely. (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Cassie, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Don and Betty*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Sustain the ministries of this congregation and all churches in this community (*neighboring congregations may be named*). Nurture each congregation's unique witness to your presence; foster mutual respect; inspire our cooperation in loving our neighbors. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We praise you for the faithful who have gone ahead of us, both famous and unknown. Help us to leave our nets and follow, and bring us with them to the fullness of your promise of eternal life. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.
Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Liberating God,
you break the bonds of injustice
and let the oppressed go free.
Receive these offerings in thanksgiving
for all your works of merciful power,
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.
You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior,
Amen.

Words of Institution

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, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

Holy One,
we thank you for the healing
that springs forth abundantly from this table.
Renew our strength to do justice,
love kindness,
and journey humbly with you.
Amen.

Blessing

The God who faithfully brings forth justice
and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.
Amen.

Sending Song

"We Are Marching in the Light"

#866

Dismissal

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said,

AMEN!

January Financial Snapshot

With two Sundays to go...

Total Revenue **\$7,680**

Total Expenses **\$10,702**

Current Difference
\$3,022

Annual Meeting will be January 29, at 10 a.m.

Recurring Gifts

If you have your offering set up as a recurring gift, please make sure it isn't set to end in 2022. If you are interested in setting up a recurring gift, you can go to our website and click on the GIVE button; set up as a regular bill in your bank account; or call the office for other options.

Camp News

Luther Park Bible Camp, Inc. will hold their annual meeting on Saturday, Feb. 4. Coffee and refreshments will be served starting at 9:30 a.m. with the meeting beginning at 10 a.m. All are invited to attend, and if you are interested in being a delegate for our church, see Pastor Josh.

Luther Park Bible Camp is looking for a reliable, mechanically sound vehicle for camp use. If you have such a vehicle that you would like to donate, please contact them at 715-859-2215.