

*Sunday January 21, 2024  
Third Sunday after Epiphany  
Hills of Peace Lutheran  
Kamloops, BC  
Pastor Jane Gingrich  
**Jonah 3:1-5, 10**  
**Psalm 62:5-12**  
**1 Corinthians 7:29-31**  
**Mark 1:14-20***

This part of the gospel according to Mark is most popular for the words that Jesus speaks to the disciples when he tells the fishers that they will “fish for people,”

Have you ever been fishing before?

Or, if not - have you ever had to do something else that was difficult?

Of course, yes!

2000 years ago, these people were out fishing with their Dad when Jesus came along and said, “Leave everything and come and follow me.”

So that’s what they did- they left everything behind and followed a stranger.

Personally, I would want to ask Jesus some questions first! Wouldn’t you?!

But *somehow* the people knew that Jesus was going to do something amazing and that he was going to include them in that amazing activity.

Now, I am going to describe two groups to you. Separate communities of people, if you will:

In the first group, everyone lives their lives on their own. They interact with each other, but maintain a sense of being separate from one another.

Every time a person gets angry, they feel angry for a long time.

Happy things happen, but it is easier to focus on the sad things, on the unpleasant things, and on the experiences that make life difficult because there is no opportunity for them to let go.

People in the first group seem to have a lot of problems, but nowhere to deal with the problems.

Then there is another group, a second community of sorts:

In the second group, everyone lives their own lives in connection with a community and with God who care for and share in their happy and sad days.

In the second group, when someone gets angry or hurt, they use “forgiveness” and “love” to feel better again.

There are lots of experiences that make life difficult at times,  
but the people in the second group have each other and God to turn to.

That is you.

You are a fully loved person dwelling within a community.

Isn't that amazing?! Can you believe that God can do this?

Right now we are here among God's community- with people who love us and are here for us on good days and not so good days.

That might be in person – or online.

But by our baptisms we have all accepted that our lives will be different.

In baptism, God changes us and makes us part of a world-wide family.

This gift from God doesn't mean that we avoid times in life that are difficult – *those people who left their families to follow Jesus still missed their families I'm sure!!*

But being part of the Body of Christ means that no matter how difficult things get, we will always have what we need to get through.

Amazing!

With God and with each other, we always have everything that we need; so we can feel confident about stepping out of the boat and following Christ.

Each of us is called.

Now:

Imagine being opened to follow Christ wherever we are led...

Imagine dropping everything we control or hold on to so tightly.

Imagine finding our value in *who God calls us to be*,  
rather than finding value in what we do or own.

Imagine what it might mean for us to place our entire future on what we  
hear God proclaim to us through Jesus Christ.

[pause]

God is re-forming us and shaping us for life beyond what we are able to see.

We experience this already:

- in the waters of baptism, we dropped everything we thought identified us...
- and in the holy communion meal we join together at the table that Christ has set for all

We *are* changed by answering Christ's call.

We *are* made holy by receiving God's gracious self-offering in the sacraments.

We *are* made holy through prayer and sharing in the Holy Spirit.

We become who God calls us to be  
because that is the life of a beloved disciple.

May it be so.