

Epiphany 3B

January 21, 2018

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Jonah 3:1-5,10

Reluctant, but finally consented to go; God was about to act.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

The appointed time has grown short.

Mark 1:14-20

Jesus announces, "The time has come"; says, "Follow me."

I can **feel the excitement** in this story of Peter, Andrew, James, and John dropping their nets, leaving their boats, their jobs – even their families, to follow Jesus. He didn't tell them to repent, or to believe. He didn't ask if they loved him (except Peter, later); or if they would worship him; or if they would lay down their lives for him. Jesus simply invited them to follow him – and they did. They were invited 'as is'. Whatever gifts they would need - would be given. Whatever empowering they would need - would happen. They dropped their nets – they made a choice to act.

In the Epistle reading today, Paul told the Corinthians to not wait for Christ's return **in order to live their new life as Kingdom of God people**. God's Kingdom is already here, because Christ is in them – and so they should be living that new life NOW. WE should be living that new life now – the Kingdom of God is already here, being born in our midst, whenever two or three are gathered in his name.

These four fishermen weren't lured into following Jesus from some philosophical argument about who God is. What drew them was a personal invitation **to follow Jesus**: It was a call **to DO something**.

This message is not of Jesus demanding instant conversion, but **inviting action**. So how are we doing in our 'call to action', following Jesus? Before I joined you here, you started putting programs in place that would return St Luke's from a Restoration church to **full parish status**. It has taken hard work - action, and we will find out in a month or two, but I think **you did it**. You and Rev Amy dreamed a BHAG of having a **bilingual pre-school** here, that would bless this community, and would help St Luke's financially. It took the focused, hard work of getting licenses, making physical changes to the building, getting grants, hiring people, and **you did it**. Your hearts have been touched by the **needs of the homeless**, and the poor, and the abused, and so you have developed great support programs for the Food Bank, and for Chamberlains, and using Hollister community events as opportunities for Outreach, and **you did it**.

The 'doing' of things like this requires that you be willing to change priorities in life, to choose differently, to think differently, to live life another way - the life we are called into by Jesus. This is about choosing to participate - not only in a belief system about who God is, but to act - making things happen that please God. So our faith journey is not a consumer model; it is more like being partners in a start-up company.

I think about Apple Computer. When I came to California in 1981, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak had only recently left HP. Engineers there told me that they asked their management to build a personal computer, but HP refused. So they left HP in order to fulfill their dream. What they created are exciting products that have changed the world; the way we work and the way we manage our lives; the PC, laptop, digital on-line music, a phone that is actually a handheld PC, day planner, and telephone – all in one. Start-ups begin with a vision - but they thrive through their action.

What we do as people of God is not only about our being here on Sunday sharing in worship, but it is also about **dropping our nets** in order to live our life in God's Kingdom – here and now.

There is a wonderful atmosphere in the church office that I wish every one of us could carry into our day.

- We welcome a visiting family who decides to enroll their child into our care.
- A homeless person comes, asking for help to buy food.
- A woman calls, asking for money to pay an electric bill.
- I visit the Food Bank, and we are offered to have a 'service day', to come and help on a food distribution day.
- Brian Nordwick offers to come preach here.
- Two of our teachers Stela and Lanette show up with their pickup trucks, and clean out all of the accumulated, worn out yard toys and trash in the yard.
- I contact our music group about supporting a Taizé service this coming Thursday, to be attended by churches throughout Hollister, and every one of them says 'yes'.

That all happened in our office over the past two weeks.

Our challenge from Jesus is to **live the Kingdom of God NOW**; to **accept the invitation**; **be willing** to drop our nets, and look for chances to **fish for people**.

Jesus wants us to follow him 'as is'. Whatever gifts we need will be given, as they have been. Whatever empowering we need will happen, as it has happened. Our faith decision is to follow, to act, to move, to change, to build, to experiment, and to grow in our complete reliance on God to bless what we do. What an invitation this is before our Annual Meeting next Sunday, where we set the stage for our fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry and mission for the coming year. Are you ready? Look out 2018!! Let's go!