

Isaiah 9:1-4

Matthew 4:12-23

1 Cor. 1:10-18

“Come, my heart says,
“Seek God’s face!”
Do not hide your face from us.” AMEN!

Last week when we were in John’s gospel
we heard Jesus’ first words to his disciples.

It was a question: “What are you looking for?”

Today (now we are in the gospel of Matthew) and
we hear his first sermon.

Or at least a part of it.

Jesus was saying,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven
has come near.”

The word in the Greek
is “kerygma” which means?

“Proclaim or preach.”

Jesus, after his baptism,
after his battle with the devil
in the wilderness, after he’d heard

that John the Baptist had been arrested...

Jesus began to “kerygma.”

He began to preach:

Repent for the kingdom of heaven
has come near. (Pause)

What does that mean? Repent?

Most of us, even now, think that repent
means to stop doing bad things or
to ask for forgiveness of sins or even
to be moral.

Those things are good to do
but they do not adequately define
the Greek word we translate to “repent.”

The Greek word is “metanoia.”

From “meta” we have
the root word for “go beyond” and
“noia” there is the root word for “mind.”

So, it is best to translate “metanoia”
to mean “go beyond your
present state of mind.”

Even simpler, it means to
“change your mind.”

Now, I say, “even simpler” but changing
one’s mind is not at all simple.

Human beings like repetition and
we are resistant to change.

We are not very good at it.

But it’s an important part of Jesus’ first sermon
so we better pay attention to His preaching.

“Go beyond your present state of mind,” Jesus said.
“For the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Now, kingdoms we know about.

People have the kingdom of house,
the kingdom of stuff
(usually packed up in storage somewhere);

we have the kingdom of sports,
the kingdom of fast cars,
the kingdom of comfort,
the kingdom of safety.

“Change you mind” for the
Kingdom of heaven has come near.

And the point Jesus makes is
that all of these “kingdoms” are included
and blessed, but they are not enough
to fulfill us.

More is required by Jesus if we are
to become whole.

In the beginning of this gospel,
Jesus pointed his proclamation
(his preaching - kerygma) to draw
the listener to God’s restoration of

coming to know what is good for the whole -
good for the holy.

It helps to think of this as Jesus’
“common good” vision.

It’s difficult to define but
his message is the catalyst that moves listeners
to go beyond their present state of mind.

Our present kingdoms... you might say.

The catalysts that are found in
the questions at children’s time and
the conversations in our book studies.

They are the sparks we encounter in giving
to the noisy offering and sharing gifts in
the collection plates.

Moments when we begin to change our minds
to be more for wholeness and community.

The tender moments of holding the hand of
the suffering and fragile. (Pause)

It is saying, and believing, that enough is enough. (Pause)

It is not easy to do.

Our economy, news, and political organizations
thrive on making us believe one tragic thing:
and that is: we are not enough.

From these false teachings
we battle consumerism, depression, and division.

These are the seeds that grow nationalism,
addiction, and greed.

But when we “change our minds” and
“go beyond” - that is when
we begin to grow.

We might not walk away from our jobs,

like the fishermen did, on the Sea of Galilee
but some might.

There are all sorts of theories as to why these guys
left their professions to follow Jesus.

We guess that they must have known Jesus, or
that they couldn't resist his charisma.

But what if they'd just had enough?!?

Enough of a career that served
the Roman Empire and their hard work barely
gave them what they and their families
needed to survive.

What if walking away from their job was
an act of following God in a radical way;
a revolutionary act protesting the
Roman Empire. (Pause)

Every now and then people do respond to
the gospel in unexpected ways.

In seminary there are plenty of former lawyers,
health care professionals/doctors, and other
well-salaried professionals.

They walked away from all of it to follow God's call.

The Rev. Dr. Fred Craddock tells the story of a medical student who heard the call and made a radical response.

“After hearing the sermon on today’s text, she went to her pastor and said she was going to leave the medical school and work among migrant workers in the Rio Grande Valley.

Dr. Craddock didn’t manipulate her unexpected response.

Instead they talked about the meaning of her decision.

Her parents, were understandably, furious,” but like the fisherman she had had enough of watching from the sidelines.

She heard the call and stayed with it. (Pause)

There are countless stories of accounts like hers.

Even ones that include people leaving the call of ordained ministry to become followers of Jesus.

“Is it possible for God to call people out of
ordained ministry if God, once upon a time,
called them into the ministry?” (Pause)

The calls from God that each of us get,
demand a response, a change of mind and
a new start. (Pause)

So, Jesus preached a “change of mind” and
he encourages people who have
had enough to follow him, BUT
he did not stop there.

“I will make you fish for people,” he said.

We bristle with the word, “make.”

But it is not as a slave master -
it is the truth of what will happen when
we become part of a different
kind of community.

The kind that Jesus envisioned and
the kind Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians.

It’s the kind that we example during times
like today’s congregation meeting.

You see, we can read Paul’s appeal

to come together and think that
“coming together” is the goal.

But coming together is not the goal.

The goal is to follow the foolishness of the cross
because that’s the power of God...
that’s hat Paul is talking about,

the goal is to witness the way new communities are
formed as we bear witness to Christ.

We’ll practice this profound act
with dialogue, forgiveness, trust, and
an expression that gives the benefit of
the doubt to other members of
the Body of Christ.

Beloved, you are enough. (2X)

Don’t let anyone change your mind about that.

AMEN!