

Abandon Your Nets

*A Missionary Commentary on the
Sunday Readings*

Sunday Readings

Jon 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

Paul Harvey, an American broadcaster for ABC News Radio from 1951 to 2008, was known for his “Rest of the Story” segments. He would provide context, background, and curious development to human interest stories. In contrast, St. Mark, in writing his gospel, focuses on the raw facts of the story, barely more than headlines. Yet, by pondering the three movements of today’s gospel, we can begin to appreciate the “rest of the story.”

The first movement is the arrest of John the Baptist bringing an end to his ministry of preparation. The cry of the one in the desert has been heard, the long awaited one has arrived. Jesus accepts the Baptism of John to be with us in our sin and to encourage our repentance. In the desert, Jesus embraces the fragility of humanity, with all its many temptations, as well as the baptism of the Spirit that he himself will give to his disciples.

Jesus begins his mission, the second movement, with the proclamation of the gospel. Today, the Kingdom of God is at hand in him. To grasp God’s Kingdom, to see it, hear it, touch it, we must repent of our sinful ways, change the way we live, and believe in him. Everything must change. The way we see God, worship him, learn from him. How we see one another, how we relate to each other, how we decide what is good and bad, how we love. Finally, we must change how we orient our lives. The truth and goodness of who we are is not found in what we do but how we love God and others.

The final movement in today’s gospel is discipleship. Jesus comes to Simon and Andrew as they were “casting their nets into the sea.” He calls them to follow him. He will make them “fishers of men.” They abandon their nets because Jesus will give them new nets. They must leave the Sea of Galilee because they will now be fishing in the ocean of humanity. Jesus also calls James and John, stressing the need to shift our focus from the family business to the mission of the kingdom. In and through the community of missionary-disciples, Church, Jesus gives us a new boat to gather us, unite us, and send us into the world.

As we ponder these movements in today’s gospel, we begin to see the “rest of the story.” In these six verses in Mark’s Gospel, we begin to see the beginning of the missionary

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Church. It is noteworthy that, at the end of the Synod on Synodality in October 2023, the title for the synthesis report was “A Synodal Church in Mission.”

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Jonah was God’s reluctant messenger. He announced the destruction of Nineveh. They heard and repented. God did not destroy Nineveh. Jonah was angry with God. Jonah, too, needed to repent. God’s compassion and justice is not something we can judge.

Psalm

God teaches us sinners his ways, guides us in his truth, and leads us into his justice. We just need to be humble.

Second Reading

“For the world in its present form is passing away.” St. Paul encourages his brothers and sisters to begin to live in a different way.

Gospel

John was arrested. Jesus begins his mission. His proclamation is crystal clear, astonishing, and unbelievable. The time of fulfillment is today, this very moment. God’s kingdom – replacing all other kingdoms – is at hand. We just need to repent and believe this incredible news by leaving our old ways and by following Jesus.

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**Please pray for the missions.
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