



Celebrate

Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2024

As we continue through the time after Epiphany, stories of the call to discipleship show us the implications of our baptismal calling to show Christ to the world. Jesus begins proclaiming the good news and calling people to repentance right after John the Baptist is arrested for preaching in a similar way. Knowing that John was later executed, we see at the very outset the cost of discipleship. Still, the two sets of brothers leave everything they have known and worked for all their lives to follow Jesus and fish for people.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah's dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question "On whom should God have mercy?"

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ²"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." ³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall

be overthrown!" ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.



God a - lone is my rock and my sal - va - tion.

For God alone I ¹ wait in silence;
truly, my hope ¹ is in God.

**⁶God alone is my rock and ¹ my salvation,
my stronghold, so that I shall nev- ¹ er be shaken.**

**⁷In God is my deliverance ¹ and my honor;
God is my strong rock ¹ and my refuge.**

**⁸Put your trust in God al- ¹ ways, O people,
pour out your hearts before the one who ¹ is our refuge. **R****

**⁹Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath;
those of low estate can- ¹ not be trusted.**

Placed on the scales together they weigh even less ¹ than a breath.

**¹⁰Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no ¹ empty pride;
though wealth increase, set not your ¹ heart upon it.**

**¹¹God has spoken once, twice ¹ have I heard it,
that power be- ¹ longs to God.**

**¹²Steadfast love belongs to ¹ you, O Lord,
for you repay all according ¹ to their deeds. **R****

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Paul does not disapprove of marriage or other human social institutions. He does, however, want Christians to live in the present in fervent anticipation of God's future, which even now has dawned through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Gospel

Mark 1:14-20

Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as "the gospel" or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our rock and deliverance, do not let your church be shaken. We trust you never abandon your promises to the most vulnerable among us. Give your church wisdom and empathy in its varied ministries. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God our hope and refuge, you placed the fish in the sea. Guide our care of oceans and all creatures that live in them. Hold us accountable for actions that endanger water sources and the people who depend on them. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God who proclaims judgement and offers mercy, be a model to the leaders of our nation and the world. As they lead, may they follow in your way of justice and truth. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God who cares for the suffering, care for survivors of assault and sexual abuse and sustain all who minister to them (*as the martyr, Agnes, ministered to victims of sexual abuse*). Keep safe any who live under threat of violence, those living in poverty, and any among us who are ill or in pain (*especially*). God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God of resurrection and new life, as the first disciples shared the good news, empower us and this faith community to be open to your call. When we are uncertain of your call, assure us. When we have strayed from your ways, redirect us. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God who holds the saints against your tender bosom, we trust you welcome them into your care. Comfort those who grieve, even as we place our hope in your salvation. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Genesis 12:1-9. **Tuesday** Genesis 45:25—46:7. **Wednesday** Proverbs 8:1-21. **Thursday** (Conversion of Paul; Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends) Galatians 1:11-24. **Friday** (commemoration of Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries) Deuteronomy 12:28-32. **Saturday** (commemoration of Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith) Deuteronomy 13:1-5. **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany** (commemoration of Thomas Aquinas, teacher, 1274) Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28.

CELEBRATE January 21, 2024

Volume 55, Number 1

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 763-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8730. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part \$5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Robert A. Hobby. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year B* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). Please visit our website at augsburgfortress.org. Lectionary year B.

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