

Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Mark 1:14-20

**Hymns: 336, 217, 326, 45, 287, 568.**

**Psalm 62.**

P My soul waits silently for God alone.

**C My salvation comes from Him.**

P He alone is my Rock and my Salvation.

**C He is my Stronghold. I shall not stagger greatly.**

P How long will you people attack a person? How long will all of you be intent on murdering him,  
**C as though he were a leaning wall or a tottering stone fence?**

P People are planning only to force him down from his high position. They take delight in lying.

**C They are blessing with their mouths, but inwardly they are cursing.**

P Wait quietly for God alone, my soul!

**C For my hope comes from Him.**

P He alone is my Rock and my Salvation, my High Refuge.

**C I shall not stagger.**

P My salvation and my glory rest on God,

**C my strong Rock, and my refuge is in God.**

P Trust Him at all times, you people! Pour out your hearts in His presence!

**C God is our Refuge.**

P Surely the descendants of Adam are only breath. The sons of man are an illusion.

**C When they go up on a pair of scales, they are altogether lighter than breath.**

P Do not trust in extortion or put false hope in robbery!

**C If riches increase, do not set your hearts on them!**

P God has spoken once. I have heard this twice,

**C that power belongs to God,**

P and that mercy belongs to You, O Lord.

**All: For You repay a person according to what he has done.**

**Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **C Amen.**

**Old Testament: Jonah 3:1-5,10**

**Epistle: 1Corinthians 7:29-35**

**Gospel: Mark1:14-20**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before from Mark 1:14-20 which was our Gospel reading before.

**14 After John had been arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News of God: 15 “The time has come and the kingdom of God is near. Repent, and believe in the Good News!”**

**16 While He was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Simon’s brother Andrew casting a net in the sea. For they were fishermen. 17 Jesus told them, “Come and follow Me! I shall make you fishers of men.”**

**18 They at once left their nets and followed Him.**

**19 When He had gone on a little farther, He saw James, the son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were also in their boat, mending their nets. 20 He called them at once; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him.**

Lord God, Heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your Truth, Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with You

When we take the time to think about it, the transfer of power in our country is really quite amazing. There is a procedure. There's months of campaigning, each of the parties have to come up with a list of policies to entice the public into thinking which of them would be able to run our country the best. Then we go to the polling booths and place our votes in a box so that later on they can be counted to elect a new Prime-minister or to retain the old one! Hopefully this all takes place peaceably! It's called the Westminster System. This is quite a contrast with most of human history. For most of human history, the transfer of power usually meant somebody had to die.

In the most favourable situation, the king died of natural causes and his son, the prince, became the new king. Although this transfer of power is still relatively peaceful, the average subject had no say in the matter. Whether the prince was a genius or an idiot, he was the new king.

In other cases, rulers stole their authority by assassination. Rulers had to have food and wine tasters to assure that they were not poisoned. Kings had to keep an eye on the members of their own families. A certain amount of paranoia helped many kings maintain their thrones and their lives.

Then, of course, there were the conquerors - people like David of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Cyrus and Darius of Persia, Alexander the Great of Greece, Hannibal of Carthage, Julius Caesar of Rome, and the list goes on! These people built their kingdoms by raising armies, conquering other kingdoms, and joining the kingdoms together into empires. These rulers built their empires at the price of a great deal of blood.

There is one thing that all of these rulers have in common. Whether these rulers came to power through the peaceful transfer of the modern democracy or the violence of war, they don't have the authority to rule within themselves. They must receive the authority to rule from outside of themselves. From an earthly standpoint, they must have people, land, and other resources in order to govern. The lands they rule sustain them. Earthly rulers ultimately receive their authority from the empires, kingdoms, or countries that they rule.

In today's Gospel, Jesus proclaimed, "**The time has come and the kingdom of God is near.**" The Kingdom of God is different from earthly kingdoms because it does not rely on outside resources or people. Instead, God rules, and His ruling creates and sustains the kingdom. While earthly kings depend on their kingdoms, the Kingdom of God depends on God, its king.

Not only does God's Kingdom exist in a different way, but it also reveals itself in a different way. The Kingdoms of this earth put on an extravagant show. Kings live in palaces. They have personal guards and servants, food and drink tasters, as well as other support staff. Even our own Prime minister has people to guard and care for his person at any given moment - not to mention the hundreds of people who serve in the administration without the other party members! Remember the pomp and pageantry of crowning of her Majesty Queen Elisabeth that we've seen on the news lately with a crown so heavy with jewels she was afraid it would break her neck, and a golden coach that weighs 4 tons. They were grand. They were glorious. That's the way it is done here on this earth. Earthly kingdoms tend to do everything big. They reveal themselves in very public and very extravagant ways.

On the other hand, when God reveals His Kingdom, most people see just a man - the apparent son of a common carpenter. He has no servants. His clothing is simple. When someone asked about His home, Jesus said to him, "**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.**" [Matthew 8:20] The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of paradoxes. So much is the exact opposite of what we expect.

There is a reason that the Kingdom of God is so much different from the kingdoms of this world. As Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "**My kingdom does not belong to this world.**" [John 18:36] Jesus did not come to rule, but to submit. Jesus said, "**The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" [Matthew 20:28.] The king who ruled over heaven and earth left His throne, hid His glory, and joined His subjects here on this earth. He suffered as we suffer. He was tempted as we are tempted. Nevertheless the king did not sin as we sin. For the writer to the Hebrews says, "**For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses. However, we have One who has been tempted in every way like us. Yet He was without sin.**" [Hebrews 4:15] Then - even though He

was sinless - He suffered the punishment and death of sin. The king took on the sins of His subjects - you and me - and then endured whip and crucifixion so that we - His subjects - might have eternal life. The king endured the punishment His subjects deserved and gave them the royalty of His righteousness to take its place. We are now kings and queens in His kingdom.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, He opened the entrance to this kingdom. That way is now open and will remain open to the end of time. The proclamation of Jesus in today's Gospel tells us how we enter this kingdom. **"The time has come and the kingdom of God is near. Repent, and believe in the Good News!"** of the Gospel.

Repentance begins with confession. We acknowledge our sin and our sinful nature to God. Then repentance asks God for the desire and power to change our sinful ways. As we repent, we believe that God will remove our sin and guilt for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. As John wrote in His first epistle, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**[1 John 1:9] Those who repent and believe in the Gospel find themselves in God's kingdom. Those who refuse to believe cannot enter God's kingdom and so find themselves in the dungeons of hell.

We cannot repent and believe in our own power. Even these elementary actions of the Christian are the work of the Holy Spirit in us. They are a continuous, living, active part of our relationship with God. We sin every day, and so we repent every day, and every day our Saviour-King comforts us with the eternal truth that our sins have been and always will be forgiven.

**"The time has come and the kingdom of God is near. Repent, and believe in the Good News!"** This is the message Jesus proclaimed. This is the message that He passed on to His Apostles when He made them **"fishers of men."** This is the message that the Church has proclaimed down through the centuries. This is the message that the Church proclaims today. **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Good News."**

Amen.

The peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 326,**

### **Prayer of the Church The 3rd Sunday after Epiphany**

P Let us pray for all people and their needs, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

*Brief Silence:*

P For the Church of God, that hearing both Law and Gospel, we would repent of our sins and believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the ministers of the Gospel, that they would carry out their work diligently and faithfully, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those oppressed by the devil and his evil works, those who suffer from depression, doubt and disease, that God would free them from their bondage and comfort them with His grace, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who are sick or hospitalized [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_], that God would strengthen and heal those whom He will and give courage and support to those near the end of their life in this world, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who are homebound and alone, that God would comfort them with His holy Word and that those who visit them would support and encourage them with God's love and grace, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the right use of the Sacraments amongst us, that God would edify us by daily returning us to the waters of Holy Baptism, grant us forgiveness in confession and absolution, and strengthen our faith with the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Supper, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For all followers and disciples of Christ, that God would make us His faithful people, going where He would have us go and doing the work He has called us to do, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For all who seek to work in the kingdom of God, especially for those who are thinking about taking up study to be future pastors and that they might faithfully serve Christ's Church, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For bringing St. Paul to confess Your Son to be the Saviour of the world and for his bold witness to the Gospel, let us give thanks and ask that we, too, may be determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 45.**