

Urgent - Urgent!

Scripture Readings: Jonah 3:1 - 5; 1 Corinthians 7:29 - 31;
& Mark 1:14 - 20

Let us during this time of sharing open in prayer:

Let us hear the word of God as those who know the kingdom of God has drawn near. Let us heed the word of God as those who believe in the good news. Let us live the word of God as those whose lives have been called to be a witness to others. AMEN.

Our lives are full of urgency. It often seems that we travel from one urgent moment to another. Urgencies are all around us and when one urgent thing is over, another appears. We have many moments that turn out to be urgent. We live on the verge of life getting out of control. We live in a state of urgency!

Live is one crisis after another - that is life!

In our first scripture reading we have the story of Jonah and Nineveh. It is a story full of urgency. Jonah prophesies to the people of Nineveh that they shall meet their doom at God's hands in 40 days if they do not repent. Jonah tells the people of Nineveh that God's wrath is on its way if they do not repent. 40 days until the end! Jonah says to the people of Nineveh - urgent; urgent!

The funny thing about this story is that Jonah wants the people of Nineveh to perish. We need to remember that Jonah did not want to do this assignment from God. He tried to travel in the wrong direction so that he did not have to tell the people of Nineveh God's plan. Jonah thought that nothing in Nineveh was worth saving. In Jonah's opinion - do not give the people of Nineveh 40 days - give them an hour! Jonah thought his trip and message would make no difference.

The people of Nineveh do repent and are saved. In their moment of urgency, they repent and are saved from doom. Urgent, urgent!

Have you ever had the same feeling Jonah has about Nineveh with a town near you? I did – I hated the people from South Williamsport. People in Williamsport PA thought they lived on the wrong side of the river and we called them ‘River Rats’. My High School friends and I took great pleasure riding across the river to play a pick-up basketball game behind the South Williamsport Fire Company and beating their butts! Jonah had his Nineveh and I had my South Williamsport!

The community I pastored at for 20 years hatred the next small town near them. People from Millville PA hatred people from Benton PA! Even though there were 15 minutes away from each other, there were many people in both towns who hatred each other! They were arch rivals in all sports. In fact, both towns had good high school soccer teams and if one town beat the other, they would receive the ‘Cider Jug’ as a trophy for their victory and when this happened town’s people would run onto the soccer field and carry the ‘Cider Jug’ around and mock the fans from the other town! A had a man in the church in Millville who would never go to Benton sporting event because he did not want the school district to get a dime of his money! Jonah had his Nineveh and Millville had their Benton!

Do you have a town you dislike? Jonah had Nineveh, what town do you have?

In my short time here in Bethany Beach, I have heard people say they do not like going to Ocean City. I do not think it is because they do not like the people there, I think they hate to fight the traffic there!

Jonah had Nineveh, Bethany Beach has ?????

In our second scripture reading from 1 Corinthians we have another urgent moment. There is some urgency here. ‘Time is short’ - urgent, urgent. If you start a statement with the phrase that the time is short - you have got my attention.

Paul counsels the church in Corinth that time is short. Paul warns them that through Jesus Christ the old world has passed away and time is short.

Look at the symbolism -

*if you have a wife, it will be like you have none. Now do not kid around with me and say that would be nice because you will miss the symbolism.

*Those that are happy, it will be as if you are not.

*Those that buy something, it will be like it is not yours to keep. There is truly much urgency here. Time is short.

And our final passage in which urgency is present is Mark 1:14 - 20.

Jesus proclaims that the time is fulfilled. Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God has come near. Jesus says - 'The time has come! Repent and believe the good news!'

Look at the way Jesus calls Simon Peter and Andrew. Jesus walks along the shore and calls out to Simon Peter and Andrew who were fishing at the time, 'drop your nets and come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him.

At once - that is a statement of urgency.

I know many of you, including me, do not like this story. Jesus calls and immediately they answered the call. I know many of us want to hear Jesus call and put it on hold. It is like we want Jesus to call us, but if we see Jesus' name on our caller ID, we want to answer it when we are ready. We do not want an urgent call from Jesus.

We want Jesus to walk along the shore of our life and see us working at our job. We want him to call to us and say - 'Come follow me when you are ready and I will make you fishers of men.' I hope you noticed that I added the words - 'when you are ready'. We often do not want an urgent call.

Look at the way Jesus calls the brothers - James and John. He goes a little farther along the shore and he sees the sons of Zebedee preparing their nets for their daily work of fishing. Jesus calls them and immediately they leave their nets, work, boats, and family and follow Jesus.

Without delay they leave all that they know and respond to Jesus' calling. Without delay - now that is urgent!

I know many of us do not want this calling also. Jesus calls us and we have to leave our families, friends, vocation, and way of life to follow him. We want Jesus to call us but not if it means leaving all that we know.

This passage from Mark is a troubling passage because it is full of urgency.

Whether the time is near or at hand. Whether the time is seemingly over or sometimes soon. We live in a time of urgency. Because of this - faithful action is called for! Faithful action is called for!

If true faith and repentance can save Nineveh, it can save us. We need to heed Jonah's words - urgent - urgent! We are called to put our faith and trust in God.

Paul told the church in Corinth that time was short. Paul tells us also that time is short - urgent - urgent! We are called to put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ for he is our rock and salvation.

Jesus proclaims that time is fulfilled through him. Let us rejoice that God has come near us in Jesus Christ. Urgent - urgent! We are called to put our faith and trust in God and Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

This world is passing away. The appointed time has grown short. O God, we shall not be shaken. Let us put our trust in God, our refuge. Let us rest secure in God who is our rock because God has the power to deliver us from evil.

Let us believe in the good news that the kingdom of God has come near.

AMEN.