

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
First Sunday in Lent, February 21, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 421, 237:1, 512, 496, 644.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Romans 3:19-26, Matthew 4:12-22.

Sermon Text: Mark 1:14-22.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ, the Savior of all people, dear friends:

One of the most comforting truths of the Bible is that Jesus is the Savior of all people. ***“God so loved the world...”*** John 3:16 ***“He died for all.”*** 2 Cor. 5:15 ***“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*** I John 2:2

So it was that when God promised a Messiah for the Jewish people, he also through his prophet Isaiah foretold of his Son being the Savior of the Gentiles: ***“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”*** Is. 49:6

Since we are of Gentile forefathers, this is of special comfort to us. The season between Christmas and Lent is the Epiphany season. In that season, emphasis is put on the appearance of the Savior to the Gentile people who were in the darkness of sin.

Galilee was a part of the land of Palestine where there was a large Gentile population. Isaiah foretold of the Savior coming to this part of Palestine. He wrote that ***“...in the future [God] will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan - the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”*** Is. 9:1-2

We learn today of:

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE.

- 1. Jesus preached for the salvation of his hearers;**
- 2. Jesus called his first four disciples; and,**
- 3. Jesus taught as only the Son of God could teach.**

Our text establishes the time when Jesus' ministry in Galilee began. ***“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.”*** Jesus was brought up in Galilee in the city of Nazareth. He also had been in Galilee earlier in his ministry. After preaching in Judea for some time, Jesus returned to Galilee and made Capernaum his home city. There are two reasons for Jesus leaving Judea and going to Galilee. The first reason was the opposition of the Pharisees in Judea. John's Gospel says: ***“When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.”*** John 4:3 The other reason why Jesus went to Galilee was in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy that Isaiah spoke about honoring Galilee of the Gentiles, and that the Messiah should be a light in the darkness of sin in the region of Galilee.

Jesus' important message for his hearers in Galilee was for their salvation. ***“The time has come,' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”*** This was not a new message. It was the same message that John the Baptist had preached before King Herod put him into prison. It is the same message that we find throughout the New Testament Scriptures. Jesus said the time had come. John had told the people: ***“After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.”*** Mark 1:7 That more powerful one had now come. The Messiah was ready to do his work in Galilee.

Jesus preached: ***“The kingdom of God is near.”*** Jesus is the King in the kingdom of God. He rules in the hearts of people with his powerful Gospel Word. Jesus had come into the world for the salvation of sinners. The time had come for people to hear of that salvation by the preaching of the Gospel, and through the power of that Gospel Word to enter into the kingdom of God. To be under the rule of Jesus’ Gospel Word is a precious blessing. Paul says that the kingdom of God has to do with ***“righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*** Rom. 14:17 The blessings of the kingdom are very precious. In a parable Jesus made this comparison: ***“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*** Matt. 13:44

Jesus preached in Galilee so that people could have that precious blessing of being under him in his kingdom. He said: ***“Repent and believe the good news.”*** Jesus preached that people should repent of their sins, that they should have sorrow in their hearts because of their transgressions of God’s commandments. Repentance is not a one-time thing, but something that should take place daily, for we sin daily. Luther in our Catechism wrote that the water of Baptism “signifies that the old Adam in us is to be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and is to die with all sins and evil lusts; and that again a new man should daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

To believe the good news, as Jesus said, includes, first of all, to know the Gospel truth, and then to accept it and trust in it with all our heart. The good news of the Gospel is this, that though ***“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*** yet all ***“are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*** Rom. 3:23:24. The good news is that Jesus was made to be a sacrifice for our sins as the Lamb of God, so that all our sins might be atoned for. The good news is that Jesus’ work of redemption in keeping the Law for us and suffering, shedding his blood, and dying for our sins, was perfect. And therefore, God, when he raised up his Son from the dead, declared that the whole world of sinners was counted just and righteous in his sight for Jesus’ sake. ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Rom. 4:25.

Many people, sad to say, do not believe this good news. When it is believed, it is the Holy Spirit who works the faith by the powerful Gospel Word, so that the hearers accept it and put their trust in Jesus. Paul says: ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Rom. 10:17 That you and I have accepted the good news of the Gospel and put our confidence in Christ, is a most precious gift of God’s grace. For this grace and mercy of God in Christ, we should never cease to give thanks, and we should show our gratitude by leading a God-pleasing life.

Jesus was only on this earth a few years and his ministry was only to last about 3 1/2 years. Therefore, he called disciples, so that he might instruct and train them for the work of bringing the Gospel to the ends of the world. We learn from our text how **Jesus called his first four disciples.**

2

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.” John’s Gospel tells us that Jesus had already invited these men to be his followers earlier, but the call to be his apostles came at this time, Jesus said: ***“Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*** As Jesus walked along a little farther, we are told: ***“He saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.”***

Jesus’ call to these four men was clear: come and follow behind me as my disciples. They were to leave their work as fishermen, their way of making a living, and follow Jesus full time. They were to be instructed and trained for their future life-work. Jesus put it this way: ***“I will make you fishers of men.”*** They had been professional fishermen, working with boats and nets on the Sea of Galilee. Now they were to become fishers of men, working with the Gospel Word to gain souls for the kingdom of God. Without hesitation or delay, the four men followed the call of Jesus. Later on, others were called, and Mark’s Gospel tells us: ***“He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*** Mark 3:14

The calling of the twelve apostles was a one-time thing, but Jesus still calls those who believe on him to be his followers and help spread the Gospel. We aren’t speaking only of pastors who earn their living preaching

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the Word, but of all believers in Christ. With the Gospel in our hearts by faith, and with the gifts the Lord has given each one, he wants us to make known the salvation in Christ to others as we have opportunity. Here we should remember the words of the hymn-writer: "Let none hear you idly saying, 'There is nothing I can do,' While the souls of men are dying And the Master calls for you. Take the task He gives you gladly, Let His work your pleasure be; Answer quickly when He calleth, 'Here am I, send me, send me!'" (The Lutheran Hymnal 496, v. 4)

After Jesus called his first disciples, he lost no time in carrying on his ministry in Galilee. We are told in our text how **he taught as only the Son of God could teach.**

3

"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." The people in the synagogue were dumbfounded when they heard Jesus preach, for his preaching was so different from the preaching of the Jewish scribes, the teachers of the law. On another occasion, when the chief priests and Pharisees had sent the temple guards to take Jesus captive, they came back empty-handed and said: ***"No one ever spoke the way this man does."*** John 7:46 No one ever spoke the way Jesus did, because he alone was sent from heaven by the Father as the great Prophet Moses had prophesied of. Through Moses the Lord said: ***"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."*** Deut. 18:18 Jesus preached with authority because he was the Son of God who proclaimed only what the heavenly Father wanted him to preach. Jesus said to the Jews: ***"He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."*** John 8:26 Jesus taught as only he could teach, because he is the one and only Son of God.

What has this to do with us today? Jesus' words are recorded for us in Holy Scripture. The evangelists and apostles by inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote them down for all succeeding generations. The Word of God is never outdated. Peter says: ***"The Word of the Lord stands forever."*** 1 Pet. 1:25 Because Jesus' Word is God's Word, and is eternal, and has all authority, we should always continue to hear and learn what the great Prophet of Galilee has to say. He says to us: ***"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** John 8:31-32 Then we can also help spread Jesus Word and make this our prayer:

O Christ, our true and only Light,
Enlighten those who sit in night;
Let those afar now hear Thy voice
And in Thy fold with us rejoice. Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 512, v. 1)

(Revised from the Ministry By Mail sermon for January 8, 1989.)