

Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Year B 23/24 January  
Evening and Morning Prayer by Zoom  
St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton NY  
Patricia Kay Jue, lay preacher

## **You Have Looked Into My Eyes: Transition, Urgency, Intimacy**

Jonah 3:1-5, 10  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20  
Psalm 62:6-14

In last week's Gospel reading, Jesus was in the Village of Galilee, maybe at something equivalent to the Village Square in Clinton. There he found Philip and said "Follow Me." Philip found Nathanael, and said, "Come and See." Jesus has begun gathering the disciplines, and the first disciplines in their turn, invite others. Come, see, follow...So today, it so easy to skip to the second half of the Gospel reading: Jesus, standing by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, calling out to Simeon Peter and Andrew, and then to James and John. And later in Mark's Gospel, Jesus will be joined by the women of Galilee: Mary Madalene, Mary who was the mother of James, and Joses, and Salome.<sup>1</sup>

But first, before this gathering, we hear "...John was arrested." John, the baptizer. John, crying in the wilderness, and telling all the people who gather around him, "REPENT, turn back to the way of G-d."<sup>2</sup> John makes the urgent call for repentance: John, the one who makes way the path for Jesus. This John [is] arrested.

The Gospel says:

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of G-d, [and] say[ing], "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of G-d has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Transition...first John, and now Jesus.

For us, living in these United States, transition has been front and center in our national discourse. Now, please understand, I am not drawing parallels between John and Jesus, and between the political administration whose term ended this past Wednesday, and the one whose term has begun. Rather, I want to focus on transition, and the urgency so often associated with transitions, with that interface between what was and what is.

We see an urgency playing out in our most recent national discourse, in addressing climate change, in how we think about justice—environmental, racial, economic justice— and in what we understand about who has power and privilege, and who does not.

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<sup>1</sup> C.f. Mark 15:40-41 "There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him ("served" *diakonein*) when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem."

<sup>2</sup> This homily writer uses G-d for the written name

So too there is an urgency that underlies today's readings.

Just "Forty days" cries out Jonah.

"The appointed time has grown short" writes the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth.

"Follow me" says Jesus.

"Immediately"<sup>3</sup> Simon and his brother Andrew left their nets.

"Immediately" Jesus calls James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

Immediately they leave their father, and the hired hands.... perhaps not even to pause to say, "Dad, tell Mom we love her, and we won't be home for dinner." Immediately, urgently, this is the hour, at this is the time. G-d's work is to done.

"Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly."<sup>4</sup>

"Feed the hungry, cloth the naked, welcome the stranger, care for the sick,"<sup>5</sup> the widows and orphan, those who have the least power.

The Gospel reading tells us nothing about Simeon Peter and Andrew's previous knowledge of Jesus. Had they been part the crowds hearing Jesus' call to repent? Or, in their business working to catch fish, was this Simeon Peter and Andrew's first encounter with Jesus? We do not know. For the Gospel writer, the surrounding circumstances are unimportant. At this moment of transition, all focus is on Jesus, on G-d— made human, incarnate. Jesus calls, G-d calls.

Caught in this moment, I am reminded of a painting by Duccio. Many of Duccio's paintings bridge the styles of Byzantine Constantinople and the Italian Renaissance. His painting of people have an expressiveness, showing a full range of human feeling, the clothing seems to drape around them, flows around their body. Those who lived in Duccio's lifetime said his people seem real: human.

In Duccio's imagining of "The Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew,"<sup>6</sup> Jesus stands on the lakeshore, the rocks are sharp and seem to rise up behind him, like hills. The apostles are in a boat, a very small boat. They hold a net full of fish: there are other fish swimming free. But what catches my eye is that while one of the apostles seems to just be turning around towards Jesus, the other faces Jesus. Jesus seems to be looking directly into his eyes, hand outstretched. And the apostle looks back, eyes transfixed, hand up as if in recognition, or pledge; caught in the moment of transformation.

Yet for all the humanity in the expression of these three people, Jesus, Peter and Andrew, except for the little boat, the blue-green sea and the sharp rocks, the painting is filled with a seemly blank background. Gold-leaf, following the style of Byzantine icon paintings. Gold, an indication that what is being depicted is holy. One homogenous color, yet not, because the background reflects, and shimmers, at this moment of transition, immediacy, and intimacy.

And this makes me think of another expression of this moment. Monseñor Gabaráin, a composer of Spanish liturgical music, wrote "Pescador de Hombres" ("Fisher of Men"). A version of this song can be found in our little green hymnal, *Wonder Love and Praise*, as Hymn 758.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *kai euthys*

<sup>4</sup> From Micah 6:8

<sup>5</sup> From Matthew 25:35-40

<sup>6</sup> Duccio de Buoninsegna (Sienese, c. 1250/1255 - 1318/1319): *The Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew*, ca. 1308-1311, tempera on panel, painted surface: 42.7 × 45.5 cm, Samuel H. Kress Collection Acc. No. 1939.1.141 available through the NGA Images open access policy: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> Hymn #758: *Tú has venido a la orilla* [You have come down to the lakeshore] Words: Cesáreo Gabaráin, alt. trans. Madeleine F. Marshal, **Wonder, Love, and Praise: A Supplement to the Hymnal 1982**, Church Publishing, Inc. New York.

v.1 You have come down to the lakeshore  
seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy  
but only asking for me to follow.

Refrain:<sup>8</sup> O Jesus you have looked into my eyes: kindly smiling.  
You've called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
now with you, I will seek other seas.

v.3 You need my hands, my exhaustion,  
working love for the rest of the weary  
a love that's willing to go on loving.

Refrain: O Jesus you have looked into my eyes: kindly smiling.  
You've called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
now with you, I will seek other seas

Transition, urgency, intimacy

Jesus you have looked into my eyes: kindly smiling.  
You've called out my name.

You need my hands...working love ...a love that's willing to go.

Jesus has called out your name. G-d needs your hands...working love...Transition, urgency,  
intimacy. What is G-d calling you to transform today?



The Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew  
Duccio di Buoninsegna tempera on wood, 1308-1311  
National Gallery of Art. Washington DC Acc. 1939.1.141

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<sup>8</sup> Señor, me has mirado a los ojos  
Et sonriendo has dicho mi nombre  
En la arena he dejado mi barca:  
Junto a Ti buscaré otro mar