

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Epiphany 3B
January 21, 2024
Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20

God Calls and Sends His Preachers

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." (Jonah 3:1-2 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

God says through Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Is. 55:8-11).

Now, what does that have to do with Jonah and the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John? Just this: God chooses and sends His servants to preach His Word, and that Word accomplishes the purpose for which He sends it.

Yet consider who He calls to do that. Let's go back a bit to the calling of Moses. The Israelites had been in bondage in Egypt for a long time. God appears to Moses in a burning bush and tells him, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:10-11). When God answered, Moses asked, "What should I tell them when they ask, 'Who sent you?'" God told him what to say. But Moses wanted no part of this. So, he said, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" (Ex. 4:1). To which God gave him signs to show that God did send him. Still, Moses tries to get out of it, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." (Ex. 4:10). And when God answers that objection, Moses pleads, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." (Ex. 4:13). But God would not be deterred. He had chosen Moses and he would go and lead the Israelites out of Egypt, though the people didn't always listen to him or like him. God's Word accomplished the purpose for which He sent it: the deliverance of His people from bondage.

Next, we consider Jonah. When God first called him to go to Nineveh, Jonah ran the other way. Still, God had chosen him and would not take “no” for an answer. He delivered Jonah from the belly of the fish and called him again, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” (Jonah 3:2). This time, Jonah goes. And the message he proclaims is God’s Word, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4). That’s extreme Law. Not exactly a message to endear you to your enemies. Yet, what happened? Did the people mistreat Jonah and make his life miserable? No! The people believed God. They repented by fasting and putting on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. God’s Word had accomplished the purpose for which He’d sent it. After all, God says through Ezekiel, “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live. . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.” (Ezek. 18:23, 32). You would think Jonah would be ecstatic that the people had listened and repented, and that God had shown mercy to them.

But if you know the rest of the story, you know he wasn’t. He was angry. He went out of the city and sat down in a huff. He complained to God, “I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.” (Jonah 4:2). Indeed, Jonah knew God perfectly well, and he didn’t like it. He wanted the people of Nineveh to get blasted.

Yes, God had called Moses and Jonah and all the prophets to preach His Word. And if you know how things went with them, you know they weren’t always good. At times, they failed miserably. The people didn’t always want to listen to them. And yet, they were God’s chosen men, whether they liked it or not. God’s Word was preached and accomplished what God wanted.

And then, we get to the calling of Simon and Andrew and James and John. Jesus calls these fishermen while they were working. “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” (Mark 1:7). And they immediately left their boats, their nets, even their family, and followed Jesus. Again, Jesus Word accomplished its purpose.

But, how would they be made into fishers of men? By following Jesus, learning from Him, and preaching the same message He did: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15). Yes, they had been chosen by Jesus to preach God’s Word to the world. Yet, they did not always get a good reception, just as Jesus was often opposed. But, they were faithful. Even when they were later told by the authorities to stop speaking in Jesus’ name, they would not stop. Jesus’ Word would continue to do what He sent it to do: showing sin, calling to repentance, bestowing faith.

So, what does all this have to do with us? Well, God continues to send His preachers to His Church to preach His Word. And, as often happened with men sent by God, especially the

prophets, and even Jesus Himself, they were often opposed and mistreated, and sometimes killed. The people to whom they are sent don't always like what they have to say. They didn't like being called sinners and being called to repentance. To be sure, these pastors are not perfect. Yet, when they faithfully preach God's Word, the hearers should be much more like the Ninevites. They should listen to them, believe what they say, repent of their sins, and believe the Gospel they proclaim. To be sure, you may not like their personality, their mannerisms, some of the things they say and do. But when they speak and act in accord with God's Word, your problem is not with the pastor, but with God. And because you do not want to hear God's Word, or you do not like what He says, you take it out on His preacher. Such should not be!

For indeed, pastors are sent by God every bit as much as were Moses, Jonah, and the other prophets. They are sent to proclaim sin and grace, call people to repentance, and lead people to Christ. After all, Jesus' proclamation is as needed today as it was when He first spoke it, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Repent of your sins and believe in Jesus, the One who took your sins upon Himself and gave His life for you on the cross. He is still with us to forgive us and give us eternal life. Hear His Word that it will have its way with you so that you will be saved from the destruction that His Law proclaims. Indeed, Jesus is here calling you to follow Him in life and in death and unto eternal life. God grant you to hear, repent, and believe. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener
Pastor

Immanuel Lutheran Church of Augsburg
1297 E 900 Ave.
Shobonier, IL 62885
church: (618) 846-8383
personal cell: 330-204-4180