3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B

January 20/21, 2018

Jonah 3: 1-5, 10; 1Cor 7: 29-31; Mark 1: 14-20

Are you willing to be changed? Are you willing to be open to the power of the Gospel to change your life?

St. Mark is emphatic in today’s Gospel reading that the Gospel has the power to radically change people. Simon, Andrew, James, and John are examples of this. They cast aside their nets and followed Jesus after he proclaimed the Gospel to them. They are also examples also of *immediately* responding when hearing the Word of God, not hesitating.

We hear of the same thing in our first reading from Jonah. Jonah’s preaching of God’s Word to the Ninevites unexpectedly and immediately changed an entire city, a city which had been locked in sin and idolatry, but were open to hearing and changing.

God’s Word, the Gospel, is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating deeply into our souls. Every time you hear the readings at Mass, every time you hear the homily, you are hearing the Word of God proclaimed. Are you ready to hear and change? Will you have ears that are open? Will you listen? The Gospel can, and will, shake you up, change the direction of your life. It always begins with the call to conversion, repentance, to change by turning away from sin and turning toward faith in Jesus and a life of charity to others.

St. Paul says in the second reading today that time is short. We must not delay our response. We must change now. St. Paul says that the world as we know it is changing because the Word of God is being proclaimed and that Word is changing the world.

God speaks, we must listen. God calls, we must respond. God leads, we must follow. There is no need for hesitation or fear. No need to be afraid of God’s Word. What we do need to fear is our hesitation, being slow to respond, not changing, not turning away from our sins. We must not delay our response. It is God who speaks, God who calls.

We can be tempted to become gloomy or even despondent at times when we look at our lives or at our world. We may be tempted to lose faith. We may even succumb to thinking God is powerless, absent, or maybe he doesn’t even exist. But there is no need to despair if we believe in the power of the Gospel, God’s Word, to transform lives, change even whole nations, like the Ninevites.

What are the steps we need to take? First, we must **hear the Gospel** with open ears. For that, we must be present. We need to be here every Sunday to hear that Word. Second, we must **believe what we hear.** Yes, hearing leads to belief. Third, we must **make a change.** If we believe, we must live differently.

***Hear, believe, change!***

Without hearing, there can be no belief. Without belief, there can be no real change. Without change, there can be no life of charity.

Finally, there is no need to shirk from boldly proclaiming the Gospel to others. God expects all of us to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. Those of us in Holy Orders, i.e., deacons, priests, and bishops, are particularly responsible and privileged to preach the Gospel at Mass and elsewhere. We must do so faithfully, fervently, reverently, and boldly, for the conversion of souls and the good of the world. You the laity are also called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all you meet in your lives.

Let us not only hear, but believe. Let us not only believe, but change. Let us set aside anything that keeps us from following Jesus and the Gospel. Let us in faith, abandon our nets and today follow the Lord.