

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2021 – 3rd BEFORE ADVENT

COLLECT

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 62: 5-12

- 5 Wait on God alone in stillness, O my soul; ♦
for in him is my hope.
- 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation, ♦
my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.
- 7 In God is my strength and my glory; ♦
God is my strong rock; in him is my refuge.
- 8 Put your trust in him always, my people; ♦
pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.
- 9 The peoples are but a breath,
the whole human race a deceit; ♦
on the scales they are altogether lighter than air.
- 10 Put no trust in oppression; in robbery take no empty pride; ♦
though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.
- 11 God spoke once, and twice have I heard the same, ♦
that power belongs to God.
- 12 Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord, ♦
for you repay everyone according to their deeds.

Hebrews 9: 24-28

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and

after that the judgement, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Mark 1: 14-20

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^[a] of God,^[b] ¹⁵ and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;^[c] repent, and believe in the good news.'^[d]

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

A Reflection from Hannah....

All talk and no action? There are a lot of words in our society. In fact, with COP26 in our minds just now, we might reflect that the power of words alone is wearing thin very quickly, and after decades of unfulfilled pledges we may be feeling justifiably cynical about our collective capacity for change.

In many areas of our common life where so much is diminished and systems and decisions perpetuate injustice, it's *action* we long for. The time for words is over. This week's gospel passage is full of action. It begins with the arrival of Jesus 'proclaiming the good news of God'. Was that met with cynicism? Well, that might have been the expected reaction, given that this was a well-known tool for sharing news in Roman-occupied lands. Someone would come into a public space, and declare 'good news'- though the words that followed may have been anything but! Mark's Gospel places the arrival of Christ in that vernacular- it is news shared in the way that news would have been shared in that day. But though the medium was familiar, there must have been something so distinctive, so radical and so attractive about those words that it caused a breath-taking response. For one thing, four fishermen immediately dropped everything and followed Jesus. More action.

And the good news that Jesus declared was that the Kingdom of God has come near, so we are invited to repent and believe. Repentance is action too- it means to turn, to change. It's not a small word, but one that implies that our whole being is involved. It is transformation- transformation born out of belief in the reality of the life of God amongst us.

As pilgrims, we know that the call to follow, to repent, to believe is one that we don't simply make once and for all. Over and over again, we are invited to notice the ways in which the Holy Spirit can transform us and heal us. Indeed, if our lives, our daily decisions, our priorities, our attitudes look

the same as they did five years ago (for example), then something is perhaps a bit stuck. We could even go so far as to suggest that if our lives, our daily decisions, our priorities, our attitudes look the same as they did last month, something is perhaps a bit stuck. The call upon us, as disciples of Jesus, is to an adventure which is always changing, as more and more we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. Indeed, that was the experience of those four fishermen who abandoned their nets. They embarked on a journey of discovery with Jesus, in which they would misunderstand, make mistakes, have their assumptions challenged, experience alienation, reconciliation and revelation... many times over. Those words- repent and believe- were a soundtrack, rather than a single moment.

In fellowship with the saints, our experience of daily renewal is something that we can commend to the world around us, especially in these times which resist the very idea that big change is possible. We know that repentance is real, that transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit is real, and that it is a process we never come to the end of. That is the good news we proclaim.

Last week, I attended a presentation by The Children's Society. They included the following prayer in their liturgy- it is a prayer of transformation, of repentance and action. It's terrifying, challenging, hope-filled and awesome. Dare we make it our prayer too?!

*May the God who shakes heaven and earth,
Whom death could not contain,
Who lives to disturb and heal us,
Bless you with the power to go forth and proclaim the gospel. Amen.*