

Jan. 24, 2021. Mk. 1: 14-20. Jonah 3:1-5, 10

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Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Following Jesus](#)

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### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Fr. Beck cautions that “calls and vocations have unexpected directions. Hidden implication that are not spelled out in the fine print when we first sign on. There are no codicils and wherefores and howevers given to prepare us for what may eventuate. There is no way to anticipate every turning in the journey.” In our gospel today we only get the bare bones of the calls responded to by those fishermen of long ago. They like us only know that there has got to be something more, something better than the status quo. We like they, are now being called to that unknown ‘more’.

### MK. 1:14-20

14 After John was put in **prison**, Jesus went into **Galilee**, proclaiming the **good news** of God. 15 The **time** has come," he said. "The **kingdom of God** is near. **Repent** and believe the **good news!**" 16 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**. 17 Come, **follow me**," Jesus said, "and I will make you **fishers** of men." 18 **At once** they left their **nets** and **followed** him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw **James** son of **Zebedee** and his brother **John** in a **boat**, preparing their **nets**. 20 **Without delay** he **called** them, and they left their father **Zebedee** in the **boat** with the **hired men** and **followed** him.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus issues an invitation to follow him. The fishermen were ready. Am I also ready?

**PRAYER:** Lord, I imagine myself in one of those boats and struggling with whether to leave all I have known and those who depend on me staying the same. I know that when I make a change it will make all those who care for me to change as well. Some will celebrate for me, and others will see me as abandoning them. Help me as I try to respond to the call to follow you in such a way that it becomes what both I and they really need. Amen.

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

**PRISON:** Mark tells us now that John the Baptist is in prison, and therefore unable to minister to those who were following him. He implies that this brings Jesus out of the desert and into the open, preaching the good news of God.

*Have you ever had to 'take the ball and run with it' after someone was taken out of the picture. Did it take this to move you to action?*

*What caused you to respond in this way?*

**GALILEE:** Galilee was in northern Israel and was the site of many important trade routes. Its population consisted of people of mixed ancestry, and therefore looked down on by those of "pure blood". No one or nothing good (see John 1:46 and 7:52) was thought to originate from such a place. It was where Jesus spent most of his three years of ministry, and Mark has him begin preaching there.

*What about such a place might make it a good place to begin a ministry?*

**GOOD NEWS:** The Gospel is literally the "good news". Mark is the only evangelist who uses the word gospel in this sense. It seems to be a shorthand formula to indicate the basic message of Jesus about God.

*If you were someone attracted to John's message, what would it take to attract you to Jesus' message? Would you only give Jesus a listen after John was taken out of the picture? (See repent below)*

**TIME:** Jesus says, the time has come.

*What time does Jesus mean? How do you know when the time of waiting is ending and the new is beginning?*

**KINGDOM OF GOD:** The kingdom is the condition where God's will is done completely. It is where God is united with all that God has created in love.

*Do you think you would have understood what Jesus was telling the people that day? Did the people understand? Were the hopes of the people for liberation from Rome an impediment to understanding? What impedes you today?*

**REPENT:** To repent is to turn around and look at something in a totally new way. John preached repent and then you can be saved. Jesus preached, you are saved, and people went home and repented.

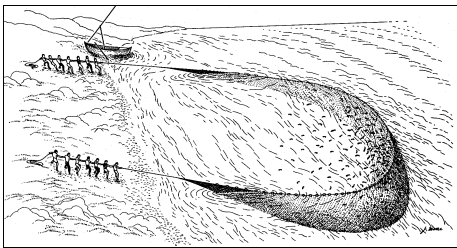
*Whose understanding of repentance are you drawn to? Why? How are they different?*

**SIMON / ANDREW:** These two brothers are the first called to follow Jesus. We are told that they were fishermen.

*Is there anything about this trade that was good training for becoming a disciple?*

**CASTING:** To cast is to throw it out from you. It also means to take a role in a play, or to shape something in a mold.

*Can all of these meanings shed light on what is going on in this passage? How?*



**NET:** Fishermen spent long hours making and mending the nets they used for their livelihood. It was the primary tool of their trade.

*Could the discipline of making and mending nets be useful in the new role of discipleship? In what ways?*

**LAKE:** The lake in question was the Sea of Galilee. It was a rich resource for fishing because it produced a wide variety of fish.

*Can the sea of people hovering around John the Baptist and then Jesus be compared to the Sea of Galilee? How?*

**FISHERMEN / FISHERS:** Since we know that Simon and Andrew were in a family business of fishing, we also know that they were people of means and had a lot to give up in following Jesus.

*In what ways can you identify with these brothers as you try to live out your Christian calling?*

**FOLLOW ME:** Jesus is always inviting people to follow him. They long for the kind of knowledge of God that he has yet are puzzled and put off by his teachings on how to achieve this knowledge.

*Is there anything about Jesus' understanding of God that puzzles or puts you off? What is it?*

**AT ONCE / WITHOUT DELAY:** Mark has a sense of urgency about the whole life and mission of Jesus. There is no time for delay. The people are desperate, and they need hope and love. The God of the temple has become inaccessible and controlled by humanity.

*Are there any parallels in the world today regarding the faith life of people? What are you doing with this new condition?*

**JAMES / JOHN:** Two more brothers are now called. These not only leave their trade, but their father. This would have been an outrage in those days to those looking on from the outside.

*If you would have been members of their families, how do you think you would have responded to James and Johns' decisions? Have you ever been a James or John? If you have, how did people respond to you?*

**ZEBEDEE:** Zebedee was the father of James and John. He was in the fishing business with his sons. Their leaving to follow Jesus must have caused him some problems.

*Do you think that Zebedee knew that his sons were longing for the Messiah? Might they have talked about it during those long hours on the sea? Could this help him when they took off? Do you share your heart hungers with those close to you so that they can understand your choices?*

**BOAT:** The four men mentioned in this gospel probably spent a major portion of their lives in a boat. It was a second home for them. Leaving the boat represents a significant change of state.

*Has your heart hungers ever caused you to leave your 'boat'? What was it like to leave? Exciting? Scary? Both?*

**CALLED:** When Jesus called, the response was immediate. Years of longing and looking readied the minds and hearts of the men who were to become 'fishers of men'.

How are you readying your heart and mind for the call of Jesus to come into a closer relationship with him? Is your scripture study aiding you in this effort?

**HIREN MEN:** Hired men are free people who worked for a wage. Having hired help tells us that they were businessmen of some means.

What are your images of those men called to be disciples? Do you think you might have been 'called' if you had lived in Jesus' day? Are you 'called' today?

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 4:12-22; Lk. 4:14-15; 5:1-11; Jn. 4:1-3; 1:35-42; Is. 9:1-2;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Jonah 3:1-5,10; Ps. 25:3-9; I Cor. 7:29-31; Mk. 1:14-20;  
Revised Common Lectionary: Jonah 3:1-5,10; Ps. 62:5-12; I Cor. 7:29-31; Mk. 1:14-20;

#### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

God calls whom God calls, it seems, and the preparation comes afterwards when we actually do the task! This is the paradigmatic pattern for all faith journeys. Richard Rohr

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. Frederick Buechner.

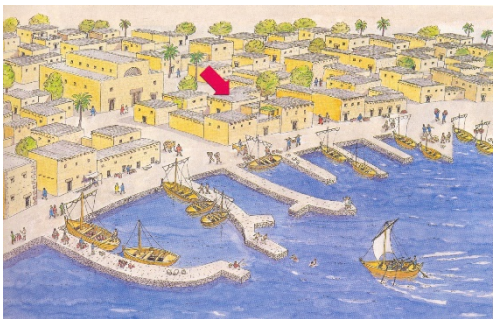
I am thinking here quite concretely of women whose children are out of the house and who at age forty-five ask themselves, *What now?* I am thinking of men who could retire between fifty and sixty to do something for which they feel a calling and a responsibility. I'm thinking of young people who after their first vocational or professional training realize that they've made a wrong choice and have to begin all over again. And I'm thinking of all those who have set out on a spiritual path, although the people around them reacted by shaking their heads. "And immediately they left their nets and followed him." Pg. 221. Jager. Willigis. [Search For the Meaning of Life](#). Liguori. Missouri. Liguori /Triumph. 1995.

The term *basileia* (kingdom) occurs 62 times in the entire New Testament, 121 times in the synoptic Gospels. The formula *basileia tou theou/ton ouranon* (kingdom of God/of the heavens) occurs 104 times in those gospels, in the distribution: Mt. 51 times. Mk. 14 times, Lk. 39 times. Pg. 13.

Viviano, Benedict T. O.P. [The Kingdom of God in History](#). Eugene, OR. Wipf U Stock Pub. 1988.

In a famous passage, Irenaeus laments the fact that heretics not only fabricate their own Gospels, but rely on just one or the other of those in the canon to justify their aberrant views. Thus, he says, the [Ebionites](#) use only the Gospel of Matthew, those who "separate Jesus from the Christ" (i.e. most Gnostics) use only Mark, the [Marcionites](#) use only Luke, and the [Valentinian](#) Gnostics use only John. For Irenaeus, however, this curtailment of the Gospel is as bad as the forgery of false texts: "It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the pillars and ground of the church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side. (*Against Heresies* 3,11.7)" Pg. 239-40.

Ehrman, Bart D. [Lost Christianities](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2003



Peter was living and working in Capernaum, a small fishing village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus called him to become a "fisher of human beings" Mk. 1: 17. The busy first century harbor town, shown in the reconstruction drawing at the left, was one of the largest and most prosperous of the dozen ancient harbors that were discovered around the Sea of Galilee during a severe drought in the mid-1980's. This led to the discovery of a 26.5 foot, first century fishing boat, popularly called the "Jesus boat", although there's no evidence Jesus or his disciples ever sailed in it. Bible Review. 2/2004 Pg. 17.

Gospel of the [Ebionites](#) (in Ephiphanius, named Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us. Coming to Capernaum, he entered the house of Simon, who is called Peter, and said, "As I passed by the lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James, sons of Zebedee, and Simon, Andrew, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot; and you, Matthew, sitting at the tax office, I called and you followed me. You, therefore, I desire to be twelve apostles, as a witness to Israel."

Against Heresies XXX.13.2-3) There was a certain man

It is important to recall that liberation, just as reconciliation and healing, must come from within. The oppressor never sets the oppressed free, and freedom given by another is easily taken away. The only true freedom is the freedom that comes from within when the oppressed overcome their fear and choose to be free. Reconciliation, healing, and liberation all involve a deep personal transformation, and they ultimately lead to a transformation of society.

”This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” Mk. 1:15. Reconciliation, healing, and liberation are manifestations of the presence of the reign of God. Pg. 155.

Wessels, Cletus. [The Holy Web](#). Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2000.

THE SEINE NET: or dragnet, up to 1000 feet long and 5 to 25 feet high, is dropped by fishermen about 100 to 300 yards from shore and stretched parallel to the land. Cork on the net’s head-rope keeps it upright while sinkers pull down the footrope, creating a wall of mesh under water – sure to trap any fish in its path. Fishermen on the shore haul in the net by pulling on towropes attached to each end of the net. A good catch can bring a few hundred pounds of fish.



Nun, Mendel. [Cast Your Net Upon the Waters](#). Biblical Archaeological Review. 11-12/93. Pages 47f.

Jesus’ outstretched hand seems both to beseech and to bless as he entreats Peter and Andrew to follow him and "become fishers of men” in this mosaic of “The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew,” from the Church of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo, in Ravenna, Italy. Murphy-O’Connor, [Fisher of Fish, Fishers of Men](#). Bible Review, June 1999. Pages 23f.

There is the call to move beyond myself and my ambitions, even to abandon them in a spell of suffering, or disorientation, or humility, or another kind of self-loss. The summons is to lose myself in ways that seem too complete, because I find myself beyond that curtain. The call turns out to be not about me at all, but about what I can offer, what I am in a position to fulfill, being the one in the place to fulfill it. It requests me to disappear in the need, into the call. And then, when it no longer matters to me, I might discover who I am. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs.-33.

**TIME:** Imagine there is a bank, which credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day, it allows you to keep no cash balance, and every evening cancels whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course! Well, everyone has such a bank. Its name is TIME. Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as a loss, whatever of this amount you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day’s deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the "tomorrow". You must live in the present on today’s deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness and success! The clock is running. Make the most of today. Seize the day!

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pages 32-35. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs. 30-33. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

#### Guided Meditation:

You cry out as you search your soul for me. / I do not answer, I do not respond in any way to your longing cry. / Why? Because I want you to find ME in others. / If you thirst for me, then serve ME by serving others. / So stop! Possessive heart! / Do not ask to "possess" a friend. / You will possess him, fill him, over power him, and still long for more to love. / Ask for MY Son! / I gave Him to you in a general way, / Now take Him in a personal way and "Run hand in hand!" / When in that moment of overflowing love that I conceived you--- / I knew what position I wanted you to play in My World Symphony of Mankind! / It seems you have not understood, / How important it is for you to serve where I have assigned you. / You are forever questioning / Hesitant and Insecure / Lest you miss MY calling. / Serve in full confidence where you are now. / If I wish to relocate you / The call will be vigorous and full / If I want you to grasp opportunities as they present themselves, / I will speak to your soul in ample time and decisiveness / My answers will come in peace and surety. / If you are indecisive or confused / You will know it is not I that speaks.

Hays, Edward. [Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim](#). Easton, KS. Forest of Peace Books. 1998. Psalm For a Stalled Heart. Pg. 173.