

Dear Friends,

As our Gospel for this Sunday opens, John the Baptist has been arrested and Jesus has arrived in Galilee proclaiming: “*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.*” There is a sense that a new day has arrived and time is short; change needs to happen, a change requiring repentance, a turning away from past conduct. No longer can it be business as usual. Time to follow God’s path wholly and completely, trusting in God who gives life and love.

Four people hear that call and accept it, Simon and Andrew and James and John. They literally drop what they are doing and respond to Jesus’ summons. They follow and during their time with Jesus they will come to understand and sometimes misunderstand this itinerant preacher who God has sent into their lives. At times they will be captivated by his words and deeds and at other times miss his point entirely, even deny him. Yet their lives do forever change. Answering Jesus’ call meant that it was never business as usual for them again.

As those called by name – as I mentioned in my homily last Sunday – it cannot be business as usual for any of us any longer. Having been invited by Jesus to follow him our lives cannot be defined by a sense of self-preservation or self-interest as was the prophet Jonah’s prior to the account we hear in our first reading today. We are called to bind ourselves more perfectly to the ways of God, which means binding ourselves ever more fully to others. Like those first disciples, we are called to cast our nets into waters that are unfamiliar and may even threaten our safety, saying to those who need God and need us, “*The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.*”

The world needs Christians who know themselves as called and sent. Our children, families and neighbors need people of faith who do not live business as usual but live and act in accordance with the new life bestowed on them through their call to follow Jesus.

Peace and blessings,
Fr. John