

“Teach me your ways, O Lord.” [Psalm 25]

A. JONAH 3:1-5,10-- The Context: This book, set in the 8th century BC., was written in the 5th century B.C. It concerns a disobedient prophet who attempted to run away from his divine commission. It was written to be deliberately humorous. It is about the proper attitude toward foreign nations, i.e. cooperating in God’s mercy toward them. [RG, 287, 288] **Today’s portion** describes Jonah’s second chance to show God’s mercy to the inhabitants of the large city of Nineveh. Jonah called the city to repentance, they complied and God withheld his punishment. [TCB 1137]

B. PSALM 25:4-9 --The Context. This is a lament. The psalmist mixes ardent pleas with expressions of confidence in God who forgives and guides. [TCB 661]

C. I CORINTHIANS 7:29-31 The Context: Paul wrote this letter in 56 A.D. to answer practical questions from the Corinthian community and to address moral disorders. [RG 406,409] **Today’s text** Paul advises Christians to go about the ordinary activities of life in a manner different from those who are totally immersed in them and unaware of their transitoriness. [TCB, 261]

D. MARK 1:14-20--The Context: This first gospel was written between 65 and 70 A.D. by Mark, a Gentile disciple of Peter and most likely he was John Mark, companion of Paul. Mark focuses more on what Jesus did than on what he said. He paints Jesus as the unrecognized Messiah. He stresses Jesus’ suffering as a servant. [RG, 331-332] **Today’s pericope** announces Jesus’ mission: the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. Jesus calls his disciples; they do not volunteer. They are to follow Jesus. Discipleship is a privilege defined here as fishing for people. [TCB, RG 337]

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME PERSONALLY TODAY?

Today’s Gospel is in two parts: **a.** the call of Jesus’ disciples and the challenge, and **b.** responses to the call. The setting of today’s gospel is immediately after Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, when he received the endorsement of his Father and was filled with the Spirit of God. John the Baptist has been recently arrested, literally “handed over”. As Jesus himself will be and his followers after him.

The Kingdom is near. So now Jesus, in Galilee, begins his public life and mission. He begins to proclaim the Good News, the Gospel. It is summed up very simply in two lines: The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** has come near, and **Repent and believe in the Good News.** “The Good News is truth. It is hope. It is peace. It is God’s promise. It brings life and immortality. It brings justice. It brings salvation and the ability to live victoriously over sin.” [Barclay, 25]

The expected time has come i.e. the arrival of the Messiah, the Savior King. And so the kingdom of God is close at hand, the kingship, the reign of God. This ‘kingdom’ is not a place but rather a web of relationships. **Those belonging to the kingdom are those who accept the life vision that Jesus gave to us and whose lives are based on that vision of life.** It does not matter who they are or where they are and it exists here and now. The Kingdom extends far wider than the Church, which is called to be the sign pointing to the Kingdom’s presence among us.

The key to the Kingdom. How are we to enter that kingdom? “Repent and believe in the Good News.” In the First Reading we see Jonah, the reluctant prophet, preaching repentance to the great city of Nineveh. Contrary to his expectations, the pagan peoples of the city “believed in God” and “renounced their evil behaviour”. ‘Repent’ here is more than just being sorry for the past; it