

Collect: GIVE US GRACE, O lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Lessons: Jonah: 3:1-5,10

Psalm: 62:6-14

669

1 Corinthians: 7:29-31

Mark: 1:14-20

Sermon: Today's message for this sermon is directly from words of the collect: "GIVE US GRACE, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ." All of us who are here and other Christians throughout the world have answered the call of Jesus Christ. In the eucharist we make him a part of our bodies. We believe that the bread is his body and the wine is his blood. We are also told, "feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving."

In the Old Testament lesson, Jonah finally answers and obeys the call of the Lord and goes to the city of Nineveh. The Lord had called Jonah earlier for this mission, but Jonah had tried to run and hide from it. Instead of going to Nineveh he tried to flee from the Lord's word by taking a ship to the city of Tarshish. God troubled the waters of the sea and situations happened that changed Jonah's mind.

Jonah went to Nineveh and he preached God's word so convincingly that the people changed their lives and turned from their evil ways. When God saw how the people changed, God too changed his mind and decided not bring chaos and destruction upon them.

The collect asks that we be given grace to **answer readily**. Does this mean right away, instantaneous?

As we look at today's Gospel, we find Jesus gathering disciples. Now we know that John had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River and as Jesus emerged from under the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon him and God spoke, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

When God sent Gabriel, his messenger angel to Mary, he told her she would be the mother of his Son and that he would be holy. But I think that Jesus didn't answer the call until he went to and was baptized by John. Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days in which he was tempted by the Satan before beginning his ministry. After he had fasted, prayed and wrestled with Satan, he then came out of the wilderness and began the job God had given him.

Sometimes we may feel that we have been called or others may tell us they think we have been called. I remember when I was a teenager and the youth leader at New Bethel A.M.E. church, on the fourth Sunday I would deliver the message "preach." Many times after hearing my message, people would tell me I was surely called to preach.

Hearing this was good news to me because I had wanted to be a preacher as long as I can remember. Along the way, in the A.M.E. church I was offered associate positions, but I felt I wasn't ready. I changed my faith in the 70's and became an Episcopalian and still wanted to be a priest, but the timing wasn't right. I loved the church, the services and working in the church. I decided I would go to seminary after I retired from the Air Force. Each airbase I was reassigned to I would find a local Episcopal church, join and get busy working in it.

I was reassigned to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas on March 26, 1986. Two weeks later, I found St. Matthew's, joined and went to work. In February of 1990 I retired from the Air Force, but decided I wasn't ready to go to seminary. I think God in his divine wisdom had decided that it was "show time" for me. The Nevada Diocese had the Total Ministry Program. This meant a parish could issue a call to a member or members it wanted as its' clergy, after a period of study and training, the person or persons would be

ordained. I was called by St. Matthew's to be a deacon then 5 ½ years later I was ordained. I often say my running days from the call was over.

Although I wasn't baptized by John, I remember at my ordination, Bishop Zabriske laid his hands on my head and pressed very firmly as he prayed: "Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to Lionel I; fill him with grace and power, and make him a priest in your Church." Although the firmness of the strength of the laying on of hands may be different, the ordination is the same for all Episcopal priest.

Give, make, and fill are words that now sends you out into the world to do God's work.

In today's Gospel this is where we see Jesus, he has accepted the call, he has been tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, now he emerges to begin his ministry. He finds disciples to help him do the work and spread the Good News. He finds the brothers Andrew and Simon Peter; they are casting their nets into the sea for fish. He tells them to follow him and he will make them fish for people.

Today like Andrew and Simon Peter, parishioners, clergy and the church are fishing for people.

I will paraphrase verse 13 of today's Psalm and say, "God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, the power belongs to God."

We hear the call, a desire to do God's work and then God gives us the power to do it. We begin to fish for people and share God's Good News with them. What is the Good News? In spite of our faults, fears and disobedience God love us unconditionally. Amen

Rev. Lionel Starkes