



**Sermon: [The Right Time for Turning](#) – Todd Goldschmidt**

Sunday Service 10:15 am – January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

**Lesson/Sermon Text: Mark 1:14-20 – (NIV 1984)**

**The Calling of the First Disciples**

<sup>14</sup> After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup> “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>19</sup> When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup> Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.



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Did you catch the very 1<sup>st</sup> command Jesus issued when He began His public preaching ministry? After stating, “The time has come . . . the kingdom of God is near,” He cried out, “Repent!” What does it mean to “repent”? The Greek term means: “to turn from something, to something.” What did Jesus want His original listeners—and by extension, you and me—to turn from, to? Jesus is calling upon all who have ears to hear to turn away from anything that would interfere with our relationship with Him. Whatever stands in the way of our walking the righteous paths He’s laid out for us, doing the good works that He’s prepared in advance for us to do, glorifying Him above all else and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves—those are the things Jesus wants us to turn from. He wants us to make a 180 degree u-turn from anything and everything that keeps us from living our faith out in such a way as to attract others to Him and Christianity.

That’s a tall order. How’s it possible? On our own, by ourselves, no matter how well-intentioned we are, it’s not. In fact, it’s downright impossible. But what we can’t do, Jesus does by the power of His Holy Spirit! It is the Spirit of God that enables us to turn from a life of sin and unbelief, to a life of trusting in Jesus as our Lord and our Savior from sin. The Bible says, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). What is “the message” by which the Holy Spirit works to transform us from rightly-condemned sinners into those in whom He dwells? It’s the “good news” of God’s love in Christ: the gospel. To that end, Jesus follows up His command, “Repent!” with His evangelical injunction: “and believe the good news!” The seed of salvation, forgiveness and new life lies nascent in that phrase. Often, that seed springs to life in the soul of a sinner through the washing of water and the Word in Holy Baptism. At other times the Word engenders saving faith through its simple proclamation.

What does it mean “to believe the good news”? It means more than an intellectual assent to the Bible’s teachings. Even Satan has that. It means to trust beyond a shadow of a doubt that when Jesus gave His life on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, He gave His life for you, personally, as one whose sins had separated them from God, as one whose guilty-deeds had hidden His face from them so that He would not hear their pleas. The Book of Hebrews defines faith this way: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for” (11:1). Staggering acts of faith follow that could only be accomplished through God’s indwelling Spirit: Abraham, i.e., left his homeland for a far-off “country,” completely confident in the trustworthiness of God’s pledge to “make him into a great nation” and His greater guarantee that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through” 1 of his descendants.



OT-time-believers perished without ever seeing those promises fulfilled. After a list that includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, the writer of Hebrews concludes: “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promises; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return. Instead, they were looking for a better county—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” <sup>(11:13-16)</sup>. That’s *faith*, my friends!

So Jesus preaches to us what He preached so long ago in the opening sermon of His ministry: “The time has come . . . the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” The time has come! What “time” is Jesus talking about? He’s referring to the eternal present—the “now” in Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthians where he writes in behalf of himself and his fellow apostles: “As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says (in Isaiah ch. 49, v. 8): “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, *now* is the time of God’s favor, *now* is the day of salvation”<sup>(6:1-2)</sup>—not tomorrow, not the next day, not five years from today, not at some future time decades down the road: *right now!* This very second, before it’s too late—before you die or before the Judge of all mankind returns unexpectedly in power & great glory to sentence you eternally either to heaven or to hell. “Delay not, delay not, O sinner draw near! The waters of life are now flowing for you. No price is demanded; the Savior is here. Redemption is purchased; God’s promise is true” the song writer Thomas Hastings pleads in his hymn of invitation – “Repent & believe the good news!”

Once that spiritual transformation occurs—once we’re personally justified in God’s sight thru faith in His Son—we’re also sanctified. Sanctified means “set apart as holy” or “called to live a holy life.” There are no benchwarmers in the Holy Christian Church! Each and every one of us has been commissioned by Christ to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” <sup>(Mark 16:15)</sup>. That work begins for us, personally, when we take the time and make the effort to share our Savior with our families, friends, coworkers, neighbors and the members of our surrounding community. It continues for us collectively as we return our thank-offerings to the LORD who bought and paid for us with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent sufferings and death. We’re part of a church-body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, that still takes world mission work seriously, as well as one that continues to hold out the life-giving Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments as God’s unaltered, inerrant, Spirit-breathed Word of truth.



That's a double-bonus, brothers and sisters! A double-bonus, these days! Our well-trained missionaries, teachers and world-seminary professors and their families go out in your stead and mine into increasingly dangerous places to share the light of the gospel with people from cultures and countries that we may never visit or interact with this side of eternity. But we'll meet those folks in heaven, around the throne of the Lamb who was slain. Like us, they'll be "wearing white robes and . . . holding palm branches in their hands," (Rev. 7:9) and we'll raise our voices together to sing the "new song" of heaven to our exalted King: "You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In the meantime, while we may never go where those WELS called workers go in our place, we can support them with our heart-felt prayers and with our generous offerings. Next Sunday after service the Council will be presenting its proposed budget for 2012—*our* proposed budget. It will include a figure of \$10,000 as Living Hope's commitment to the Synod for Congregational Mission Offerings—CMO for short.

I am confident that we can reach that goal with the help of the Holy Spirit, as well as the much larger amount of . . . that we'll be asked to fund through our general offerings. Remember the account of Moses and the children of Israel in the Exodus? The people constantly complained that God and His appointed leaders had led them out into the desert to die of hunger and thirst. Each time, God proved that He could more than meet their every need. Prior to giving them the first taste of quail, He told Moses: "'Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.'" So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent (of Meeting). Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again . . . Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail" (Num. 11:23-32a). Centuries later, God challenged the people of the prophet Malachi's day, saying: "You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (3:9-11).



In discussing the Lord's Prayer, Martin Luther said: "God has plenty of resources, and he is not a tightwad." He went on to add that God "generously offers us the best gifts available in heaven and on earth . . . God isn't content to provide us with a small amount even if we only ask for a little. He prefers to give us 'infinitely more than we can ask or imagine' [as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3:20] (By Faith Alone: Martin Luther; Gen. Ed. James C. Galvin, Ed.D.; Word Bible Publishers, Iowa Falls, IA, 50216; Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> devotion). So what's it gonna be, folks? Are we going to think small, or pray big? Are we going to view our life—and our church budget—from the perspective of what we don't have, or are we going to view it with the eyes of faith—eyes that are able, by the power of God's Spirit, to see the bigger picture and the larger purpose; eyes that are far-sighted, not myopic? My prayer for you is the same one Paul prayed for the Ephesians. Like him, "I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name," and . . .

"I pray that out of his glorious riches [God] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (3:14-20).

"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. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him." Come on, fellow fishers of men, and follow Jesus: "at once," "without delay," today! Amen.