

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

It's kind of an abrupt beginning to ministry that changed the world: Jesus baptized, tempted in the wilderness, John the Baptizer is arrested and Jesus begins public ministry. Our gospel writer doesn't spend a whole lot of time developing the story. In fact, he gets right to the point. Jesus now comes to Galilee and he is proclaiming the good news of God: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news."

The kingdom of God has come near, repent, that is, turn away from the other kingdoms that have ensnared you. Believe! Trust in the promise of the power, the presence of God. Repent! Accept being found! The Jewish people had longed for the kingdom of God and Jesus was there to say the moment had arrived. But this kingdom is not some political system, nor is it a system of checks and balances. It's no congressional scheme. This kingdom is something else entirely. This kingdom, this kingdom of God, is about love. It is love.

Our gospel writer, Mark, begins the story, and then abruptly moves on. The nearness of the kingdom of God is announced, and then Jesus begins to call disciples, followers. Simon and Andrew going about their daily business of fishing, not fishing with a rod and reel, but casting a net into the lake, when Jesus suddenly casts a net for them, telling them "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." They follow, pretty much right then and there. Shortly afterwards, Jesus calls James, son of Zebedee and his brother John, and they leave everything, everyone, and follow him.

Jesus cast his net and he drew in Simon and Andrew, James and John, he told them they would not longer be fishing for the piscine kind, but for the people kind, men women and children. The disciples relearn how to fish, they learn what it means to live in a new kingdom, not a kingdom based on power and might, but a kingdom of love and service, a kingdom of giving not taking. They learn that this new kingdom is no private matter, not a case of the simple life of a hermit or monk, living in solitude. Rather this new kingdom might be likened to an orchestra or choir, playing and singing together, filling the world with strains of new music set forth by the Lord of the Dance.

And it is still so after two thousand years, Jesus sets the pitch and we play the tunes of the kingdom for others to hear. Oh but we lose the pitch, we go flat, we can't carry the tune, society goes sharp and we're out of harmony, a cacophony, and just when we think that we've got the right tune, we lose the pitch again. We listen again and again for the right note from Jesus, over and over. So we follow Jesus to hear the pitch over and over, listening daily to our Master.

And our Lord keeps coming among us sounding out the right pitch, surrounding us with the right pitch, the gospel of love, service and giving. Jesus keeps inviting us to follow, to abide, to reside in him, to believe the good news of the kingdom. So we form our choir, our orchestra. And each of us plays an integral part, an instrument

of love, singing or playing the right note, a note of love. We have our string section, our percussion section, our brass section and an entire choir, each person playing and singing with varying skill, each adding a different voice, a different instrument, all essential for the right sound. If someone is missing, the sound will be diminished. We need the entire range of instrumentalists and vocalists, all playing and singing together so that the sound of the gospel carries throughout the world.

We don't sing or play a message of exclusion, of hatred, or discord. Instead God sets the tone, the pitch in Christ, and so we fish in a way that no one could ever have imagined. In the past two thousand years, and for thousands of years previous, kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. But the kingdom of God has come near, the kingdom of love, the true kingdom.

So hear the note of love, the pitch of God's kingdom, let it sound throughout the community, and the world.

AMEN