

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #68

READING I Jonah 3:1-5, 10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying:

“Set out for the great city of Nineveh,

and announce to it the message that I will tell you.”

So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,

according to the LORD’s bidding.

Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;

it took three days to go through it.

Jonah began his journey through the city,

and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing,

“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,”

when the people of Nineveh believed God;

they proclaimed a fast

and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their

evil way,

he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;

he did not carry it out.

Jonah = JON-nuh

To prepare, read all of Jonah 3, including

the verses omitted from today’s lectionary

reading.

Nineveh = NIN-uh-vuh

Distinguish the character voices: the

narrator, the Lord, and the prophet Jonah.

This is an important verse. The

people heed God’s warning and repent.

The theme of repentance will be heard

again in the Gospel.

God is compassionate and merciful.

These themes are echoed in the

responsorial psalm.

READING I

This passage from Jonah highlights the need to turn one’s life completely toward God. God’s word comes to Jonah, now for a second time, with a message for Nineveh. In the chapters preceding today’s reading comes the well-known story of Jonah’s attempt to avoid God’s commission and his subsequent stint in the belly of the whale. We do not learn until later why Jonah did not want to fulfill his prophetic duties: he did not want the Ninevites to experience God’s mercy. Jonah hated the Ninevites because Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian

in today’s reading, God comes to

Jonah again but does not reproach him for

his previous disobedience. Jonah goes as

commanded but does the bare minimum to

accomplish what God has commanded.

He does not even make it halfway into the

city proclaiming God’s message! Up to this

point in the book, we did not know the con-

tent of the message but finally we hear that

destroyed.

Jonah’s hatred shapes most of the action in

ants, and sent the survivors into exile.

kingdom of Israel, killed many of its inhabit-

destroyed. Forty days is a typical period of

testing and waiting. For example, Moses

spent forty days in supplication to the Lord

for his mercy after the Israelites made an idol

of a golden calf (see Deuteronomy 9:15–19).

Despite Jonah’s deficient preaching,

the people’s hearts are changed. They

repent, wearing sackcloth and fasting to

indicate the sincerity of their repentance.

They also changed their way of living and

“turned from their evil way.” As a result,

God stayed his hand and they were not

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9 (4a)

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.
 Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
 teach me your paths,
 guide me in your truth and teach me,
 for you are God my savior.
 Remember that your compassion, O Lord,
 and your love are from of old.
 He guides the humble to justice
 and teaches the humble his way.

READING II 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
 I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.
 From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
 those weeping as not weeping,
 those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
 those buying as not owning,
 those using the world as not using it fully.
 For the world in its present form is passing away.

GOSPEL Mark 1:14-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
After John had been arrested,
Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:
 "This is the time of fulfillment.
 The kingdom of God is at hand.
 Repent, and believe in the gospel." »

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

The lack of time suggests a sense of urgency.

Rhetorical negations can be confusing.

Emphasize the first mention of what is

negated and the negative, and subdue

the second mention. The bolding will help

you see the pattern.

Pause before the last line.

Don't rush the cryptic mention of John's arrest. It's a reminder—prophets don't have an easy life.

The theme of repentance from the first reading is repeated.

READING II

The prophecies of doom and destruction, such as the one found in today's reading, are not meant to be the final word. Instead, they are an invitation to the recipients to change their lives and reorient themselves towards God. We see the Ninevites accept this invitation as they "believed God," repented, and turned from doing evil.

In these verses from 1 Corinthians, Paul likewise warns his audience that "time is running out." Here Paul is referring to the second coming of Christ, which will come when it is least

expected. Thus, believers should live as if Christ could return that very day. Following this warning, Paul gives advice about how believers should live out their Christian identity with this eschatological attitude.

However, it is important to understand that in these verses Paul is speaking rhetorically and not literally. For example, his statement about those who are married does not mean that they should live celibately, as this would go against his advice to married couples earlier in the letter (1 Corinthians 7:2-6). Nor does he mean that one can really keep from weeping in that one can really keep from being prepared to stand

This reading reminds us of the eschatological tension in which we live today. We are called to live in the "now" with the end in mind. We are to reexamine our relationship to the world on all levels: social, personal, and commercial. Are we too focused on the things of this world such that they draw us away from being prepared to stand

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee,
 he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets
 into the sea;
 they were fishermen,
 Jesus said to them,
 "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
 Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.
 He walked along a little farther
 and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.
 They too were in a boat mending their nets.
 Then he called them.
 So they left their father Zebedee in the boat
 along with the hired men and followed him.

Jesus doesn't leave the disciples to their own devices. He assures them that he will make them fishers of people.
 Zebedee = ZEB-uh-dee
 Mark's account has the disciples drop everything and follow. In general, Mark's Gospel has a breathless, urgent quality. Read the actions of the disciples slightly more quickly than your normal pace to reflect the haste with which they respond to Jesus' invitation.

before God when Jesus comes again? In other words, have we turned our lives completely over to God as we saw the Ninevites do in the first reading?

GOSPEL

Today's Gospel reading presents examples of those whose relationship to earthly things is second to their relationship with God. The first person in this passage who has completely given his life over to God is John the Baptist, James, and John. Jesus calls to them and, without asking for explanations or looking for excuses, all four men immediately obey Jesus and follow him. Their actions fore-

includes a call to conversion. Jesus' words of discipleship, in which one has to leave all behind for the sake of the Gospel (Mark 10:28-29). It is crucial to realize that this does not mean that disciples must completely break from their families. In fact, a few verses after today's readings, we read about Jesus going to Simon and Andrew's house and healing Simon's mother-in-law (1:29-31). Like Paul's words to the Corinthians, the concern here is about having a proper disposition toward our earthly relationships so that we are not distracted from our primary relationship with God. M.B.

Other people exemplifying a complete turn toward God include Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Jesus calls to them and, without asking for explanations or looking for excuses, all four men immediately obey Jesus and follow him. Their actions fore-