

Third Sunday after the Epiphany Sunday, January 21, 2018

The 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.**

Old Testament: Jonah 3:1-5, & 10 read from New American Standard Bible

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 62: 6-14 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

6 For God alone my soul in silence waits; * truly, my hope is in him.

7 He alone is my rock and my salvation, * my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

8 In God is my safety and my honor; * God is my strong rock and my refuge.

9 Put your trust in him always, O people, * pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.

10 Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath, * even those of low estate cannot be trusted.

11 On the scales they are lighter than a breath, * all of them together.

12 Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride; * though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.

13 God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, * that power belongs to God.

14 Steadfast love is yours, O Lord, * for you repay everyone according to his deeds.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31 read from the New Century Version Bible

Brothers and sisters, this is what I mean: We do not have much time left. So starting now, those who have wives should live as if they had no wives. Those who are crying should live as if they were not crying. Those who are happy should live as if they were not happy. Those who buy things should live as if they own nothing. Those who use the things of the world should live as if they were not using them, because this world in its present form will soon be gone.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20 read from the New International Version Bible

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

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 send you out to fish for people." 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.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On January 27th we celebrate the lives of Lydia, Dorcas, & Phoebe witnesses to the faith. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

The commemoration of these three devout women follows directly on the observance of three of Paul's male co-workers in the Lord. It is a reminder that though the first century was a patriarchal time from which we have very few women's voices, the apostles and indeed the whole early church depended on women for sustenance, protection, and support.

Lydia was Paul's first European convert. She was a Gentile woman in Philippi who, like many others, was attracted to Judaism. As what the Jewish community called a "God-fearer" she was undoubtedly accorded respect by the Jewish community, but still would have been marginalized. Paul encountered her on a riverbank where she and a group of women had gathered for Sabbath prayers. Undoubtedly Paul preached to them and Lydia "opened her heart" and, together with the whole household of which she was head, was baptized.

Lydia was a prosperous cloth-merchant and a person of means. She was able to lodge Paul, Timothy, and their companions in her house, which Paul used as a local base of operations.

Phoebe was the apparent patroness of the Christian Community in Cenchreae near Corinth. She is the first person mentioned in the long list of Paul's beloved associates in Chapter 16 of Romans. Paul refers to her as a "sister," as a "deacon," and as a "patroness" or "helper" of many. In other words, Paul includes her as a part of his family in Christ and infers that she has housed and provided legal cover for the local church. Paul's use of the word "deacon" should be regarded with caution, since the diaconate as an order had not yet developed in the Church, but it does suggest the kind of ministry out of which the notion of ordained deacons developed. It would not be too much to call her a "proto-deacon."

Dorcas (or Tabitha in Aramaic) was a revered disciple in Joppa who devoted herself to "good works and acts of charity." When she fell ill and died, the community sent for Peter, who came and, after prayer, revived her.

Though we have no record of the words of these three women, the apostolic testimony to their faith and their importance to the mission of the early church speaks for itself.

Let us pray: Filled with your Holy Spirit, gracious God, your earliest disciples served you with the gifts each had been given: Lydia in business and stewardship, Dorcas in a life of charity and Phoebe as a deacon who served many. Inspire us today to build up your Church with our gifts in hospitality, charity and bold witness to the Gospel of Christ; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**