

3rd SUN. in ORD. TIME (B-5) (Translation) **Can we change and believe?**

If we study the story of Jonah, and how he resisted being called to prophesy to the Ninivites, we must conclude that God knew something about Jonah and his ability to be turned to do the right thing. Jesus, too, must have known something about the apostles he chose, because on 1st glance, who would ever select a band of normal and less-than-normal men? Jesus selected them because they were teachable.

How many of us are teachable or trainable? I would hope all of us are. However the reality is that most of us aren't because most of us do not embrace change. I am a golfer, and once I played with someone who helped me improve. However, I would have to be told again and again what I needed to do. He once said to me, "You are trainable, but not retainable." He meant that I had trouble retaining what I had learned. How many of us are that way?

We all tend to learn, yet our first "aha moment" needs to be sealed with action that shows the lessons have stuck. For those of us who tend to resist change it is often heard: "We have always done it this way," the phrase of the resistant. I've heard it in both parishes that I've pastored since being ordained. My response to the resistant's phrase is "So what? Can it not be improved? Can it not be done differently?" We all need to look at life in a new way and let ourselves be changed by that relook. That is what the word "repentance" really means.

Why else would God select Jonah or the apostles? There's some part of their nature that is decisive in our repentance. Once Jonah got it, he decided to do God's will. The apostles were faster than Jonah, they immediately left their nets and boats and followed Jesus. They did not procrastinate. Jesus chose men that would not put off a decision of this magnitude. Could we do it if called that way? Is Christ as influential in our lives as he was in theirs?

The 3rd reason Jonah and the apostles were called is that they were people of character, honorable people. Warren Buffett, the world's 2nd most-wealthy man, shared his secrets of business. He seeks 3 qualities in the people to be hired. They must have integrity, intelligence & energy? He warns that if someone has no integrity, then the other two qualities will kill the business. God and Jesus trusted Jonah & the apostles. Since you and I are baptized, then God trusts us to train and become apostles.

Are we people of integrity? Are we decisive? Are we passionate with energy? If we can answer yes, are then we people of courage? God, in the story of Jonah and Jesus in the gospels, wanted people who had been tested in the winds and storms of life. They did not choose clerics who lived in palatial homes, like the Pharisees and Scribes of Jesus' day. They wanted men and women who could look into the face of persecution and possible death and not flinch. Are we that type?

So to recap, let us examine our discipleship and apostleship. 1st, are we teachable? Are we learning more about God's Word and how to apply it? Are we living up to our 3rd pillar of our Mission Statement: to study? 2nd, are we decisive apostles? Are we men and women of action? And 3rd, are we people of integrity, trustworthy? And lastly, are we fearless? Do we remember that fear is not of God and so we act with confidence?

If we said "yes" to all these, then we are true Christians, emissaries of Jesus the Christ, acting without fear of embarrassment. Let me close sharing something Cardinal Cushing once said.

"If all those asleep were to wake up, if the lukewarm were to get fired up, if all the disgruntled were to sweeten, and the discouraged cheer up, if the gossipers were to shut up, and the true soldiers were to stand up, and all the church members were to pray, lifting up our Savior, then we can have the greatest renewal this world has ever known. Amen."

Would that we all could repent in this way!