

It's Kairos time! It doesn't have quite the same ring to it as the old TV commercial I remember "It's Miller time." Yes, there used to be beer commercials on network TV. And cigarette commercials too. Remember? These beer commercials painted a picture of happiness and satisfaction after a long day of work. It was time to put up your feet and enjoy a beer and everything would be just fine.

Kairos time seems to be the exact opposite of Miller time. Kairos is the Greek word for a particular point in time, or a special time. In our Gospel reading today the English we heard was "the time is fulfilled." The original Greek for that is Kairos. The time is here and now.

It was not the time to relax and take it easy. It was time to get to work. Jesus chose his disciples, asked them to follow him and gave them a task. It sounds so easy when I say it like that in one short sentence. Mark also does not elaborate. Jesus called them and they went.

Josephus, the well known Jewish historian at the time of Jesus reports in his writing what fishing was like in and around the Sea of Galilee. There were about three hundred and thirty fishing boats that plied the waters off of the western coast of the lake. Fishing was THE major industry of the area, and because there was no refrigeration and no ice, most of the fish had to be salted for transport to other areas of Palestine. It was a lucky or wealthy person indeed who was given a chance to eat fresh fish.ⁱ That's hard for us to imagine that now! Only salt fish at Stop and Shop?

So, Jesus must have had a lot of fishermen to choose from, but he chose Simon, Andrew, James and John. These were ordinary men, not educated, not skilled in rhetoric, but Jesus saw something in them. He knew that they would be great future leaders.

Jesus called them with the simple phrase, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people." Did they question the call and the task ahead? Apparently not. They just left their jobs and their family and followed a man who they must have trusted even if they did not know what would be in store for them.

I love the little detail that although James and John left their father and the boat, never fear, there were hired hands to help the father. Zebedee wasn't left high and dry, so to speak, with no way to make a living once his sons had departed.

We aren't told if there was a formal inauguration ceremony for the disciples in this Kairos moment. The Gospel writers don't say anything about the 12 having to raise their hand and take an oath before beginning their task of fishing for people.

I think it's because this was just the beginning of their period of learning and growing in faith. It was that Kairos time to repent, that is, to have a change of heart and mind (metanoia in Greek) and to begin training in how to be a disciple which would lead to how to be an apostle – a leader of people and a spreader of the Good News that God is with us, and God saves us.

The inauguration will come for them when the resurrected Jesus blesses them, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. There will be time in the future to take the oath of that office. This Kairos time of their calling will lead to a long and difficult journey before that can occur.

We heard of another man this morning who received a calling of his own from God, Jonah. Maybe he's more like us. He turned down God the first time he was told that it was Kairos time.

When God called him and gave him a task he too dropped what he was doing. But unlike the disciples, he ran in the other direction, away from the place to which he was called. He got on a ship to Tarshish, to go as far away from Nineveh as he could get.

He's the only prophet (that we know of) that had to be called two times. But after the time he spent in the belly of the fish, he became a changed man, sort of. He finally listened to God, and went to Nineveh. And, unbelievably, the people listened to him! They believed Jonah, they repented, they had a change of heart, had their Kairos moment and put on sackcloth and sat in ashes.

The call of Jonah reminds us of ourselves. We might rather have Miller time instead of Kairos time. We might like to sit down and have a rest instead of being asked to take on a new task...especially if we cannot see where we are being asked to go, or how it will all turn out in the end.

Today we will hold our parish Annual Meeting on zoom in a little while. You and I were called by God to be people of faith through whatever challenging times we are given. And this year, when we look back on 2020 during our online Annual Meeting, we will see how our ministries have had to change but that we still are a church, we still have continued the ministries that we can despite the Global Pandemic. We have continued to feed people, help those in need, offer worship and beautiful music, and communicate with each other in ways old and new.

The year 2020 gave us a Kairos time that we wouldn't ever have hoped for. But we have risen to the task and answered God's call, to the best of our abilities, despite the difficulties we faced. And we know that this time of trial has not ended. In fact, if anything, with 400,000 people who have died of Covid 19 so far in the US, and only a few of us having received the vaccination so far, we have still a long road ahead of us.

Jesus says to you and to me in this new year 2021, "Follow me." You and I are given the task to persevere, to keep the faith, to help those in need and lift the spirits of those who might be feeling worn out by all of this.

As we heard this morning in Psalm 62, "Put your trust in him always, O people; pour out your hearts before him for God is our refuge."

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Daily Study Bible, "The Gospel of Mark", William Barclay, Westminster Press, 1975, pg. 27.*