

JANUARY 21, 2018

# THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



JONAH 3:1-5, 10

PSALM 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31

MARK 1:14-20

## REFLECTION

I hope to play volleyball in heaven. Recently, I played a nearly perfect volleyball game. Every serve was strong, nearly every spike scored a point, and I had multiple blocks with one that went straight down. It was beautiful. It felt a little bit like heaven. I've also had the perfect dessert. I ordered a flourless chocolate torte with a raspberry glaze. I took one bite and I couldn't help but say, "Oh, my God." It was a little like heaven. Doing a week of service I met a man with developmental disabilities. He ran up to me and welcomed me with a big hug and a kiss. I had never been welcomed so generously anywhere in my life. I realized that this type of welcome must be what it is like in heaven. Have you had moments of heaven on earth?

Most Scripture scholars agree that the Gospel according to Mark was the first Gospel account written and that Matthew and Luke slightly adapted Mark's accounts to make theological points to their audiences. Today's reading contains the very first words Jesus speaks in the very first written Gospel account. Do you know Jesus' first words? Do you know how important these words are? "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (v. 15). Theologians have said these first words of Jesus are actually his mission statement. Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is here now. But do we see it?

## ACTION

Slowly pray the Lord's Prayer. When you get to the line, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," pause for a few seconds. Think about what this means. So often we think it only means that if we do God's will we will join God in heaven. But pray very slowly the next line and then repeat it two or three times: "On earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is challenging us to bring a little slice of heaven to earth today. To bring God's love, care, beauty, and healing to the world. Of course, heaven is eternal life, but the Kingdom of Heaven is also here now. Theologians have a way of expressing this as "already and not yet." The Kingdom of Heaven is already here, but not yet fully here. The kingdom is how God intends the world to be. A missionary disciple seeks to see and bring the kingdom "On earth as it is in heaven."

## JOURNALING QUESTIONS

● When was a time when you experienced a little bit of the Kingdom of Heaven at hand—a time when you thought everything was perfect? Reflect on this experience. What happened? Why did you think that was a sign of God's kingdom? How might you be bringing a little slice of heaven to the world today?