

January 24, 2021 (Focus: Mark 1:14-20; Third Sunday after Epiphany)

It is likely no mere coincidence that the people Jesus first calls to be his disciples are fishermen. A fisherman's calling is basically to feed people. Yes, Jesus tells them that he will make them fishers of people, but primarily they were people who fed others, before they had met Jesus, and even after.

Jesus knew that his own calling was to feed people. He knew that people were hungry and thirsty. They hungered for food and thirsted for water. And their souls hungered and thirsted: their souls ached for meaning, their souls ached to contribute meaning to life. Their souls hungered for a better world.

What do our souls ache for? What do we hunger and thirst for? In recent years, we have been living in an oasis of sorts in the midst of a desert – in our own immediate confines, we have known kindness, decency, people striving for the good of all. But our own immediate confines have been surrounded by a desert of sorts, as we have seen our greater community parched of kindness, of decency, our immediate oasis surrounded by a desert rocky with selfishness, grift, greed, and not even concerned with the lives, the families, the well-being of others. Yes, people in their own circles were taken care of, but it was as if every little oasis fended for themselves, with many kept out in the desert. Hunger and thirst all around us.

But our oasis was just a mirage, we know it, for if there are any wandering hungry and thirsty in the desert, then we cannot feel truly happy in our relative comfort. This is what following Jesus does to us. We are hungry, not just for something that will feed our souls; we yearn to throw our nets out and pull in bounties of that which will feed others, body and soul. We yearn for that feeling that we are all together in the boat, pulling together. We yearn to live not just for self but for community. Yes, some days, especially over the last year, all we have been able to manage is to get ourselves and our loved ones through day, but that doesn't mean that we also haven't yearned for better for ourselves and others.

Helping feed others, body and soul, that is part of our calling as disciples of Jesus. Helping feed others, body and soul, is also the work of our community partner, the Goodman Community Center. I call on Laura to introduce our guest from Goodman to tell us about a program that helps feed the soul and helps satisfy the thirst for knowledge of some of the most vulnerable among us, a program we seek to partner with them on. Laura:...

Gracious and loving God, we are grateful for this time of prayer, a time to sit back, to rest in you, a time to be transformed of spirit. We bring our joys and concerns, we bring our hopes and desires, we bring our deepest sense of hope to this time. We are grateful for this encounter of the holy, for this sense that we breathe in your spirit, we become one with your spirit, and our spirits are refreshed and renewed. The world is too much with us at times, and we miss the glimpses of the holy in our daily toils. Awaken our soul's eye to seek such glimpses of the holy in our daily lives; we suspect they are there, for you intend good for us. Your steadfast love endures forever, so can endure and make new even such a time as this.

Our governmental leaders need your help and guidance, your wisdom and your heart for such a time as this. For the new president and vice president and their administration, for the new Congress and our state and local authorities, pour compassion upon them, that they may remember whom they represent, and that their call is to help all peoples.

Ever Gracious God, pour out your love and your healing powers upon us, and upon all those in need of healing in body, mind, and spirit. Grant all in need an experience of your renewing compassion and care, especially...

Bless all those who have lost loved ones to this virus plaguing us now. Over 400,000 lost in our country alone, over 25 million sick; these numbers overwhelm us, yet we can see the tears of those mourning, we can hear the cries of those struggling to breathe. Bless all affected with compassion and a sense of hope, that soon our efforts will turn the corner on this pandemic.

Moment of silent meditation...

Gracious God, grant us peace in our minds and in our hearts, as we struggle with being citizens of the world and as we seek to be accountable to each other and all creation. We trust that you intend peace for us, for we have heard it in the words of our teacher and spiritual guide and savior, the one we call the Prince of Peace, who taught us to pray to you, saying, Our Father...