



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 24, 2021

The Urgency of Now

Mark 1:14-20

1:14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,

1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

1:16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen.

1:17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

1:18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

1:19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

1:20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark's gospel does not give us a lot of words or narrative. Mark is straight and to the point. He uses words like now, near, and immediately.

Jesus called and the disciples immediately stopped what they were doing and followed. These fishermen immediately stopped the normal routines and tasks of their lives and answered Jesus' call.

Some of us have immediate reactions and responses. Some of us answer the call immediately; but, for others of us, the process is not so immediate. For some of us it is slow. Still for others, the process is circuitous, and still others, marked by detours and fits and starts.

Could Mark be wanting to stress the urgency of the moment? Could he be trying to convey the urgency of Jesus' call on us?

Lives are at stake! The salvation and liberation of God's children are at stake! The wholeness of God's creation is at stake! People are dying! People are suffering! And Jesus is saying, "Follow me." We do not have it all figured out. We do not yet know everything we will need to know. There will be sacrifices, mistakes, setbacks, disappointments, even suffering; but, the stakes are high, the needs are great; and, there is an urgency! At the time of this writing, there are over 96 million cases of COVID-19 and over 2 million COVID-19 related deaths worldwide. These numbers represent names, lives, families, communities, and churches; some we personally know. Urgency!

In the Northern Hemisphere, January 18-25 for many Christians is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a time for Christians from many different churches to gather to pray and worship together, praying for unity among them and being a witness of that unity in a broken and divided world. In these gatherings for unity, may we hear the voice of Jesus over all the competing and conflicting voices of the world. May we hear his urgent call, "Follow me," and respond with the urgency of now.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, what keeps you from following and responding immediately to Jesus' call?

PRAY:

God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you". You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete. God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are. AMEN.

Adapted from the Resources for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/ENG%202021%20Booklet.pdf>

En español: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/WPCU2021-es.pdf>

Em português: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/2021%20SPUC%20PT%20Livret.pdf>

En français: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/2021%20Livret%20SPUC%20FRA%20def.pdf>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, what can you do to make yourself more ready and available to respond immediately to what Christ is calling you to do and be at this urgent moment? In this Season after the Epiphany, do what you can to show the urgency of now; help others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

I Can Hear My Savior Calling (Where He Leads Me)
AMEC Hymnal, #235

1. I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,
I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,
I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,
"Take thy cross and fol-low, fol-low Me."

*Refrain: Where He leads me I will fol-low,
Where He leads me I will fol-low,
Where He leads me I will fol-low,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.*

2. I'll go with Him through the gar-den,
I'll go with Him through the gar-den,
I'll go with Him through the gar-den,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.
3. I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,
I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,
I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.
4. He will give me grace and glo-ry,
He will give me grace and glo-ry,
He will give me grace and glo-ry,
And go with me, with me all the way.

Alternative Song: *Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* (AMECH, #: <https://youtu.be/J-8NBROOOxQ>)

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.