

January 25, 2009
Messiah
Epiphany 3-B

Mark 1:14-20
Big Changes

Introduction

1. The decision of our District Convention this past Monday means BIG CHANGES for me, my family, and for you
2. December and January have been very emotional, gut-wrenching, and soul-searching months for me
3. Being nominated for the office as District President of the LCMS, as time drew nearer, I began to feel more and more pulled toward this responsibility
 - a. A big part of me wanted to take my name off the ballot and continue being pastor at Messiah – why I leave one of the best congregations in all of the LCMS? (And I mean that sincerely)
 - b. But beyond my thoughts and feelings - my mind, and soul, and heart were being pulled to keep my name of the ballot
4. This past Monday was a long day
 - a. The voting process took many ballots – each time dropping the lowest vote-getter, and then voting again
 - b. I was almost always in 2nd or 3rd place – and then it came down to two of us – and the vote was very close (44-42) – I had received the majority of votes, and I was announced the next president of the North Dakota District of the LCMS
 - c. I was told later that I let out a big deep sigh at the announcement of that vote – like one’s life flashing before him, I was only beginning to think of the BIG CHANGES coming in my life
 - d. But I had also the wits about me to realize the person sitting to my right (Roger Dilger) had suddenly become very sad – considering the BIG CHANGES this might mean for him and the people he was representing: you – Messiah Lutheran Church
5. On February 14, 1993 – I was installed as pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church
 - a. I was 32 years old, but for the next 16 years, our lives have grown together
 - b. I have watched your children grow, and you have watched my children grow
 - c. There is complete unity in this place – the love and unity between pastor and people in this place is absolutely remarkable
 - d. This might all be much easier if we just didn’t like each other, but fortunately, that’s not the case at all
 - e. And so this BIG CHANGE in our lives may feel very difficult – filled with hurt, and confusion, and sadness, maybe even a bit of anger even, and lots of love
 - f. Later this morning, we can discuss some of the BIG CHANGES that might take place in the upcoming weeks...
 - g. But for now – let us focus on God’s Word – for this is what is most needed at this time

- h. And strangely enough, I would like to focus on the words of our Gospel Reading today, right at the very end, “And immediately Jesus called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him.”

I. Look at our Gospel Reading today – it is right at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, shortly after His Baptism

- A. John the Baptist was arrested by King Herod, and Jesus steps into the forefront
 - i. The very first words of Jesus St. Mark records for all history are these, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
 - ii. This is what Christianity is all about, this is what Messiah Lutheran Church is all about, and this is what my ministry has been all about –
 - iii. About Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, for the salvation of the world...
 - iv. ...that whoever believes in this Gospel, this Good News, has forgiveness of sins and eternal life

- B. And as Jesus begins His ministry, He begins calling His disciples, gathering a group of students and followers around Him
 - i. Intentionally, Jesus approaches two fishermen, Simon Peter and his brother, Andrew
 - ii. As they were casting their nets – Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men”
 - iii. Jesus had conversation with them prior to this – as we learn in the Gospel of St. John
 - iv. He had already begun working on their hearts and minds and souls – they had become intrigued with this Jesus
 - v. And now, for keeps, for good, Jesus approaches them and says, “Follow me.”
 - vi. And going a little bit further along the coast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus approaches another set of brothers: James and John
 - vii. Jesus called them, and said, “Follow me” – and they did

- C. But I find it interesting in what St. Mark chooses to tell us next
 - i. “And they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Jesus”
 - ii. They left their dad – right there in the boat – they just up and left him: with the business, with the workers, with the work
 - iii. They left him
 - iv. I wonder how he felt: was he confused, was he a little upset with his sons (or even Jesus), was he hurt, was he sad, was he

disappointed, did he feel deserted, or did he say “Good riddance?”

- D. I’m wondering if you are connecting with Zebedee today?
 - i. It would be sinful of me to put myself on the level of Jesus, or even someone so important...
 - ii. nevertheless, we have become important to one another
 - iii. And now I am called elsewhere, “do you feel like I’m just leaving you in the boat?”
 - iv. Are you feeling deserted, confused, hurt, angry, disappointed, or maybe you’re thinking, “Good riddance”

II. **But look how these two sons left their father**

- A. They didn’t leave mad, they didn’t leave in anger – they left being called... by God
- B. And they left their father in good care
 - i. They left their father with the hired servants
 - ii. These servants knew what they were doing, they would have cared for Dad, and Dad would be ok
 - iii. In a little while, we will talk about the care which you will receive in the coming weeks and months
 - iv. If there is a bright spot – with your blessings, I do have the privilege in making sure you are well taken care of
 - v. I would not leave my father in the care of just anyone, nor would I leave you in the care of just anyone
- C. And besides – the relationship of James and John with their father – it did not end, it just changed
 - i. They didn’t stop being father and sons, but the sons were called elsewhere
 - ii. You and I will not stop knowing each other, but we will continue to care for one another
 - iii. And the hired servants – they weren’t bad, they were just different
 - iv. As with your new pastor some day – he won’t be bad, just different than what you’ve had for the last 16 years
 - v. And my prayer, even, is this – that down the road you will say, “We loved Pastor Baneck, but this new pastor brings to us what we so much need right now. God knew what He was doing”

III. **James and John left their father – and followed Him – they followed Jesus**

- A. That’s what it’s really all about – following Jesus!
 - i. In the almost 53-year history of this congregation, this has been the message week after week

- ii. It's not about pastors or people – it's about Jesus Christ and Him crucified
- iii. He died on the cross for our sins
- iv. He rose from the dead to give us eternal life
- v. He is with us daily in Word and Sacrament
- vi. He will call us forth from the grave and take us to heaven
- vii. A choir piece we have sung for many years has become one of my favorites – not only because of the music, but the words, “Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith; who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”
- viii. And again – I draw your attention to the cross – let us not fix our eyes on ourselves, but on Jesus who loves us and gave Himself for us, who feeds and nourishes us in Holy Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper, and gives us eternal salvation!

B. And as for me...

- i. I will follow Him – my Savior, Jesus Christ
- ii. I pray I have been faithful to you, I ask your forgiveness for all my sins, I covet your prayers for my future, and I pray that, with the help of God, I will be faithful to Him in this BIG CHANGE that has now come to my life

C. And as for you...

- i. I pray the things we discuss in a few moments will calm your souls, and give peace to your ongoing lives
- ii. God has not deserted you, nor will He ever – but He will continue to bring you hope and comfort for your lives through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- iii. You will continue to be faithful to Him in all that you do, because you are the holy children of God
- iv. You know your purpose in being a church, you know the tasks set before you, you know the goals of the ministry of this congregation – and you will continue, with the help of the Lord, to be faithful in all that you do
- v. And I will pray for you, the convention prayed for you, pastors and district presidents throughout the district and synod have written to me telling me that YOU are in their prayers

Conclusion

1. Yes, there are some BIG CHANGES ahead of us
2. But you and I are going to meet these BIG CHANGES the way we have met everything together in the past...
3. With Christ Jesus being our focus, with prayer, with love for each other, and with firm confidence in our Lord
4. God be with us all. Amen.