

The Third Sunday after Epiphany
24-01-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Jonah 3: 1-10	Nineveh repents after Jonah's message
Psalms 62: 5-12	Trust God, Only God Delivers
1 Corinthians 7: 29-31	Time is Short
Mark 1: 14-20	Jesus calls to repent and believe and to become fishers of people

Introduction

The main theme from today's bible readings is Repentance.

Repentance is central to the Christian faith.

Today I would like us to look at what it means to repent, to look at what the readings have to teach us about repentance, and how we are called to repentance in our lives.

What does it mean to Repent

So firstly, what does it mean to Repent?

It is certainly a lot more than saying sorry and then getting on with your life.

The Greek word used in the original language of the New Testament is Metanoia. The first part "meta" refers to "after" or "beyond" and the second part from "nous" refers to the mind. So this would indicate it is more about a total change in your mindset. I have heard it said that repentance is a lot more than saying sorry and moving on, it's rather we need to make a 180 degree turn around in our lives. So whilst repentance will involve saying sorry, it is also so much more.

Repentance is serious and it is hard work.

It involves deep personal self reflection.

A definition I found recently is:- A profound transformation in one's outlook.

But why do we need to repent? Because we all sin. In Romans 3:23 we are told, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

And what happens when we do repent? The most wonderful thing in the world. We can be assured of God's forgiveness. That is why Jesus came.

Repentance has a beginning in our lives, when we first accept Jesus, but it is also ongoing, why else would we have the confession and absolution in our worship services, day after day, week after week.

Let us now look at what we can learn about repentance in our bible readings today.

Jonah

And what do we hear about repentance in the reading from Jonah today? We hear how the people listened to God's message, and Nineveh was spared. We hear how they listened to Jonah's message and they stopped what they were doing when they heard the decree from the King:-

"All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

And because they repented, God didn't bring about the calamity that had been promised.

Further on in the book we hear how Jonah wasn't happy. He thought the Ninevites needed to be punished.

Sometimes it doesn't seem fair, but forgiveness is what God does. If we truly repent, then God forgives. Jesus' death on the cross assures us of this.

1 Corinthians

From today's reading from 1 Corinthians we learn, "the time to repent is now".

It's a little like the old saying, "never go to sleep on an argument".

Time is precious. In this life we never know exactly how much of it we have.

Sometimes a negative example can help us and I recall this story of what repentance is not. The story is of the First Roman Emperor to become a Christian. He waited until he was on his deathbed to be baptized. He had the false impression that if he sinned after he was baptized, then he would fail to go to heaven.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul was reminding them of the urgency of turning to Jesus now. We do not know what the future holds for us on this earth, but we do know that if we have repented and turned to God, we can be assured we will be with God. The resurrection of Jesus assures us of this.

We don't have any time to waste. We need to repent now.

Mark

We hear today in the reading from Mark's gospel about the beginning of Jesus' ministry, with a call to repentance, which was begun by John the Baptist.

And then we hear Jesus calling his first disciples.

From this we can know that repentance will mean a change in our lives.

For those first disciples it meant immediate and drastic change. Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, James and John, "Follow me", and their response was to immediately leave what they were doing and follow Jesus.

Repentance may not look as drastic as that in our lives, but it will require action on our part.

What needs to change in your life?

What do you need to act on?

We are called to act as a result of repenting.

Conclusion

So we know that we are called to repentance.

Repentance initially involves reorientating our whole mindset off of ourselves, and onto God. But then what specifically do we repent of? Well firstly, we repent of things that we've done that we know we shouldn't have done, and then repent of the things that we have failed to do.

And we do this with the assurance that, "God listens" and "God forgives".

The time for us to repent is now.

As we go out from our worship today, I encourage you to take some time to be with God, and to discern where God may be calling you to make a change.

And I encourage you to use the time in the Confession and Absolution well today.

Amen.