

January 25 2015

Scripture Lessons ~

Psalm 62:5-12

Jonah 1:1-10

Mark 1:14-20

Sermon *I'll Get a Round Tuit*

Now for the most part in my ministry, I think, I pretty much know what needs to be done and when although sometimes you wouldn't know it by looking at my desk or my office if you can get in. Especially when I am working I try to operate on fairly define set of order of priorities of what needs first attention and so on down the line. But the reality is, however, it is easy for me to procrastinate as the next person, especially when it comes for doing the things that I really don't want to do. Shopping for toilet articles, for instance, is not one of my favorite tasks and I always avoid it as long as I possibility can. I do it when I get around to it. I put it off until I am finally forced go to the store and pick up some essential item like toothpaste or shampoo or soap and when I do go, you can bet your bottom dollar, I have squeezed every last ounce in the tube and I have wiped every bit of soap off that cake so that it is so thin that I can barely pick it up and I have watered down the shampoo so far that there is hardly a bubble left in the bottom of the bottle. And there are many others like me that put things off in life, so many in fact that it is now possible to make or buy a, round to it. This is one that someone once gave me and I don't know why they gave it to me and I have by the way, for your convenience put one in the bulletin for you, if you take a close look and you can take it home with you. It is easier for those people and those things that you can put off until you get around to it. Now usually it doesn't hurt to procrastinate in life after all we know that tomorrow is going to come. It always has before and we think it will always come again.

Sometimes procrastinating can be a good change of pace, in our it has to be done yesterday, kind of world where our sense of urgency or busyness that I sometimes consider are for really unimportant things is, becomes almost an oppression for us as modern people. In fact that is one good thing that I like about living in a small town like Newport but it can also be a drawback in living in a small town like Newport as well because sometimes in the midst in our slower pace of things we can grow complacent about a number of important issues and given this fact that is often tempting for us is to put our journey of faith on that list of things that we will do when we get around to it.

O we say our faith is important and we believe in God and we know all about the love of Jesus and about how we are supposed to share it with others but when it

comes to making a commitment or be changed or to be changed or share that love or not in concrete ways, well, that can be a pretty different story. I don't exclude myself from this either. We may want to put Jesus at the center of our lives and make sharing God's love with others our highest and our first priority but those things can surely wait until tomorrow or maybe the next day. Now you know I am not saying that there are no people in the world to whom God comes first, no one that could tithe or worship or nobody who cares but even those of us who try, know how easy it is for anyone of us to fall into the trap of procrastinating with our faith. We sometimes wait to reach out to God until we need God's reassurance and strength in a time of crisis or we reach out to the church only when we need pastoral care. Even if we are more faithful than that we know that deep within ourselves when or where or how we have put off becoming the loving and forgiving people that God has called each one of us to be in this world. So in this world of around to it, the gospel writer, Mark, grabs our attention, if you noticed when Pastor Allen read that passage, because Jesus tells the good news from a very different point of view. When he wrote that Jesus had recently walked upon the earth and Jesus had recently died and Jesus had recently raised again, Mark's assumption was Jesus was coming again soon as well. For Mark the kingdom of God was not something far off in the distant future. You will notice in fact he uses no future tenses in the recording of Jesus' words, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. He said repent and turn around to a more positive direction in your life; believe in the good news of the gospel. And when Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to become followers Mark tells us that they left their nets immediately. Mark loved that word. He uses it a dozen times or more in his gospel, not tomorrow not the next day not next week or when they got around to it but now today, immediately. There was a sense of urgency in Jesus word and then when Jesus did not come as anticipated the people sort of relaxed in their faith. They started to procrastinate. They became preoccupied with other things. Today we rarely wait expectantly to hear about God's love with a kind of zealous eagerness because time is short in our lives. We tend to want to leave that to those other people out there. Although from time to time when there is a close brush with death or some other major calamity might take us out of our lethargy. Most of the time we assume, we have all the time in the world to get these things done, I think as a result we have been lulled into a false sense of complacency.

Maybe this is the same problem that the prophet Jonah had to deal with when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh. He not only took his time and procrastinated as I told the boys and girls this morning, he went completely in the opposite direction to avoid doing when God asked him to-do and fortunately for the people of Nineveh God had other plans for Jonah and didn't take, I'll get around do it, for an answer. It took a storm and being thrown overboard and being

swallowed by a large fish to convince him. I was impressed by that whole idea of shooting crap to find who the guilty person was. That would certainly save me some time for doing jury duty; you could use crap and figure it all out. But finally Jonah got the point and responded to God's sense of urgency in bringing God's message to the people of Nineveh.

Maybe God won't use just drastic measures to get us to respond to God's call in our life but maybe God will. The important thing though is to remember we hurt ourselves; we hurt our family members; we hurt our friends; we hurt those around us when we could have helped. We even hurt God, I think, when we procrastinate in our faith. The bottom line is we miss out on so much as a result because when we do wait until we get that around to it where God is concerned the joy and the strength and the depth of faith that we need in times of crisis just may not be there when we need them the very most. We need then I think we need to listen to this word of God that the time is fulfilled; the Kingdom of God is at hand, repents and turns to that other direction and believes in the Gospel. The Kingdom of God is not just another thing in the midst of all those other things in our lives to get around to it. The kingdom of God is not a personal pain killer that we take when we need it and then we put it back on the shelf for the next time when we need it. The Kingdom, I believe, is God's own spirit, the Spirit of Jesus working in our world so as Christians we don't any of right at all to keep this Good News of God's love for the world to ourselves and we have every responsibility to spread it as far and as wide and as quickly as we possibly can; and this is the reason because the gift of life which God has given to each one of us is far, far too precious to waste. And together we say AMEN.