

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (2018 - B)

Our readings today all contain warnings, and warnings alert us to danger. Warnings give us a chance to act before the danger is upon us.

So in our First Reading, the Prophet Jonah goes throughout the City of Nineveh warning the people that in forty days, their city would be destroyed.

Then in our Second Reading, Saint Paul warns us that time is running out. He says, **"I tell you brothers and sisters, the world in its present form is passing away."**

Finally, in our holy Gospel, Jesus says to us, **"This is the time of fulfillment."** Then He warns us by saying, **"The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel."**

Now you don't usually go around warning people when things are safe. We usually don't say, "Look out!" or "Be Careful!" or "Stop!" when nothing is wrong.

We only say those things when there is some danger. When we're riding along in a car and the driver doesn't see something, we say "Look out!"

When we are carrying a large piece of furniture down the stairs, the person guiding us might say, "Be careful, there are still three steps to go."

When we see a child reaching for a hot burner on the stove, we say, "Stop!"

We never warn people in the absence of danger. We don't say "Look out" it's going to be warm and sunny today. We don't say "Be Careful" you might catch your limit of walleyes. We don't say "Stop the game," you might have fun.

No, we only warn people when there is some real danger like "Don't get too excited about the Vikings, remember what happened the last five times they played an NFC Championship game."

So what are we to make of these warnings in our Readings today? What's the danger here? What is the point? If we look carefully, we can find several clues.

First, Saint Paul tells us that time is running out. He also says that **"the world in its present form is passing away."**

In one sense we might take this to mean creation itself. Each week, we affirm our belief that God is Creator of all things when we say, **"I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible."** At the same time, we know that some day all these things will cease to exist. That's because Jesus Himself said, **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Mt 24:35)."**

However, there is another sense in which time is running out. Clearly, Saint Paul is also thinking about our individual lives here because these too are passing away. These too are changing a bit each day, and that is true for all of us.

If we are children, we are growing. Each year you are getting bigger and taller. You outgrow your clothes, sometimes in a month or two. If you are in your early teens, you start looking more like a woman if you are a girl, and your voice changes if you are a boy.

Then in our early adult years, when we have completed our education and begun our careers, we are looking forward to many things, to getting our own place and seeing things we have never seen and doing things we have never done and about getting married and raising a family and so on.

Later, in middle age, things change again as we have accomplished many of our goals and as we also begin to recognize we will have to set aside some of our dreams because we no longer have the time or the energy for them.

Finally, as old age comes, we have time to enjoy the fruits of our labors, and we settle in and don't look ahead so much as we look back and think about things we have seen and done.

Clearly, as Saint Paul said, **"the world in its present form is passing away."** We cannot hold on to time. We cannot go back to last year or last month or last week or yesterday or an hour ago or even a minute ago. That time has gone and it has passed away.

So Saint Paul warns us that our **"time is running out."** We only have a finite amount of time in life, but time for what?

Time to make a choice. Time to decide. Time to choose God.

The Ninevites were living in sin. They were so far from God that God had resolved to destroy their city. However, when Jonah warned them about this, when he said, **"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"** they repented and turned from their evil ways. The Ninevites heeded his warning.

Jesus warned the people of His day, **"Repent, and believe in the gospel."** Why? Repent from what? Repent from their sins and believe because **"the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23)."** Jesus was saying to the people of His day and to us here and now, reach out and grasp the kingdom of God. It is at hand now. Believe in the gospel now. Come follow me now. This is the time of fulfillment. So don't wait. The world as we know it is passing away.

When the Apostles heard these words, they responded immediately. Our holy gospel tells us that when Jesus called Simon and Andrew, they **"abandoned their nets and followed Him."** When Jesus called James and John, **"they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed Him."**

What about us? Jesus is calling us as well. Have we decided to follow Him? Have we decided to believe in the gospel? Have we decided to repent from our evil ways?

And if not, just when are we going to do so? Next week? Next month? Next year? The world is passing away. Time is running out. So what are we waiting for?

God is good, and it is His will that we live with Him forever in heaven. He offers us His love, but He will not force Himself on us. So, it's up to us to decide how we will respond, but we haven't got all eternity to decide. We only have the time that God has granted to us and no more. So there is an urgency here.

Now, here is something else for us to consider. Just as Jesus once called Simon and Andrew and James and John to help Him spread the gospel, today He is calling on us to do the very same thing. In our Lord's time, only the Jews had heard the gospel and then only in veiled terms. It was only when Jesus came that things were made clear.

It was only when Jesus began to teach that people learned about the one true God and that God had created them and that God had made them for Himself and that God had prepared a place for those who love Him.

It was only when Jesus began to teach that people learned what they must do and believe to inherit eternal life. That they must keep God's commandments. Not to kill. Not to commit adultery. Not to lie and steal. Not to take God's name in vain. To honor their parents. To keep the Lord's day holy. To care for the sick and to feed the hungry and to forgive wrongs.

Now, in our own times, the Lord is relying on us to spread the gospel and to teach others about God's love, and let me give you just one example of how we can do this.

In 1973, our Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand. Since then, there have been 60 million abortions performed in our country. Why? Because in many cases mothers felt lost or afraid or didn't know where to turn or they were lied to and told their baby was only a thing or a blob of tissue. And so, these mothers have been left hurting, silently carrying around deep wounds and pain over the choices they have made.

And how did this happen? Because our pagan culture has rejected God's plan for marriage and has separated love from life. So it encourages people to be intimate outside of marriage, and then things happen, and then one wrong choice leads to another.

For our part, we can defend life by defending true marriage. We can tell people about God's plan. That love and life go together in marriage. We can tell them that in true marriage, a man and a woman promise to be faithful for life, and when they do that, then their love can grow and then the children born from their union are blessings. Telling people about God's plan for marriage and for life and love is one way we can spread the gospel.

Our readings today warn us that we don't have all the time in the world to respond to God's call. There is an urgency here, and there is also an urgency with regard to spreading the gospel. The Lord needs us to catch men – to use his words – so that they too can believe and repent of their sins. We have been warned that our time is running out. So then, let us then get busy about these things now. Amen.