

*“In Shape for Christ’s Mission”*

Text: Mark 1:14-20

St. Paul wrote: “Do you not know that in a race all runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.” (I Corinthians 9:24-25) I remember watching the Illinois State Basketball championships on TV years ago. The comedian Jerry Van Dyke was interviewing fans from opposing schools. Both believed their team was going to win. He said: “Isn’t this interesting! You’re both going to win, this should be an interesting game!”

We know that is not possible as St. Paul points out. Those who compete must be in shape and good condition to do their best and be victorious. What are they doing it for? They are doing it for an earthly prize. In the next race or the next year there will be a new champion. For you and me there is something much greater and that is our life in Jesus Christ and our part in his mission.

The good news is that he equips us for his mission. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote: “Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2) On his way to the greatest of all victories, Jesus called Simon and Andrew to follow him in a new mission where they would fish for men. It is to this mission that he calls us as well, to live in him and by words and actions to bring others to him. Because of all that he has done and continues to do we can know that we are-

## IN SHAPE FOR CHRIST'S MISSION

I. Where He produces a change in us

II. We are made ready

III. We follow His call

### I.

A. In his book, Facing Loneliness, J. Oswald Chambers wrote: "The round of pleasure if amassing of wealth are but vain attempts to escape from the persistent ache. The millionaire is usually a lonely man and the comedian is often more unhappy than his audience."

An example of this would be was Henry Martyn who at the age of twenty confessed that his accomplishments "only grasped a shadow." He was a distinguished mathematics scholar, graduate of Cambridge and received the highest notoriety and accomplishments in his field.

At age 24, he sailed to India as a missionary. As he arrived, he prayed, "Lord, let me burn out for you." During that time God used his intellect and devotion to translate the New Testament into three difficult Eastern languages in seven years and then he died. His savior had changed and these accomplishments were certainly not passing shadows.

St Mark records that after his temptation, Jesus went about proclaiming the gospel. He said, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Jesus went through the temptation for you and me and was on his way to accomplish the salvation of the world

B. The time was now fulfilled according to God's plans for us. These fishermen would be changed men. St. Luke goes into a little more detail than St. Mark does in describing the great catch of fish and calling Simon and Andrew to follow him. (Luke 5:1-11)

God had promised the coming of his Son and now the time was here. It was right before Simon and Andrew and later it would be before James and John. These men were all men of some means,

but like Henry Martyn earlier they were changed and called to a high purpose of working in the Savior's mission field.

## II.

**A.** We are called to repentance. When John the Baptist was still active in his ministry, he called people to repentance. This is not popular with people of any day, as we all know. Our pride and sinfulness gets in the way. Many were coming to John for baptism and he told them: "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance." (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8)

Martin Luther's Small Catechism tells us that when we repent we have both sorrow for our sins and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. It also tells us that the necessary fruit or result of repentance is good works. The Augsburg Confession says: "Then good works, which are the fruits of repentance, are bound to follow." (Augsburg Confession XII 6) This is what it means to repent of our sins.

**B.** There is good news for us and it is the perfect forgiveness won by our Savior Jesus Christ. Here he was bringing the gospel to the people and announcing that the time was now fulfilled. God had promised and now he was delivering on this promise in the person of his own Son, Jesus.

What happens in this text is really a continuation of the very first verse of the Gospel of St. Mark. St. Mark writes: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark quotes Isaiah who wrote: "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Isaiah 40:3)

John the Baptist or John the Baptizer was the one raised up for this important work. As our text states in verse 14, John was now out of the picture and the work of Jesus would begin in earnest as he proclaimed the gospel which is God's plan sent in his time for the salvation of the world.

### III.

**A.** The disciples had a new purpose in their lives. No, they didn't forsake their fishing business all together. They would now do it with new vision as well as their training and reaching others with this important mission. This call goes out to us as well as members of God's kingdom as he lives and works among us.

Recently I read an interesting article about transformation. That is what has happened in our lives as well as the lives of Simon, Andrew, James, and John as well as the others. The writer was pointing to the example of RV's or motor homes. He pointed out that people bring all the comforts of home in them. No more sleeping in sleeping bags, cooking by campfires. You may see some with dishes attached to them for better television reception. It gives the opportunity to go camping without ever going outside.

People deck these vehicles out with the same furniture that is in their living room. Now that's comfortable! Apologies to those of you, who like sleeping bags, campfires, tents, and all the trimmings of real camping.

The author's point was that people could do that without ever really changing anything. They can go to a new place, but it goes unnoticed because the old setting has been carried along. Our new life in Christ, our part in his mission, is a call to the new, it is one he accomplishes in us and we desire.

**B.** As the call went to these disciples they left family behind and what they had to follow Jesus and his mission. Jesus took them where they were. If you will examine those who followed him throughout Scripture there are many examples of that-Moses, David, Gideon, Amos, the disciples, and later a man by the name of Saul. He still does the same today. He uses the gifts, abilities and experiences in us to be put in his service.

One of those mentioned St. Paul wrote: "And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (II Corinthians 5:15) That is the call to the mission of Christ is what our life is all about. Now you may not be one who is bold about sharing our faith with

others. We do however many times without even realizing it. How many people have asked you to pray for them? Maybe they have talked about your faith. Maybe you agonize about the condition of our world or country or state. These are all examples of our lives being wrapped up in the mission of our Savior. He is our life and our purpose.

He has called us to that in our baptism. He has made us ready and in shape for that mission. We continue that conditioning as we read his word, receive the Lord's Supper and continue in the life to which he has called us. Amen.