

Apprenticeship!

Jonah 3^{1-5,10}; Psalm 62^{5-end}; Hebrew 9^{24-end}; Mark 1¹⁴⁻²⁰

*Jesus said to them, 'Follow me'
[Mark 1¹⁷]*

How many have fallen victim to pranks in school or as an apprentice: Go and get some de-oxygenated water; go and get a left-handed screwdriver; go and fetch the tartan paint; go and get a box of bubbles for the spirit-level; go and find the tub of elbow grease; or bring me the glass hammer?

There is something about setting people up to fail that, somehow, perversely, many of us enjoy.

I think that some Christians enjoy the negative side of proclaiming the Good News too much as well. They, like Jonah, like the condemnation of the sinner, the call to repentance and the pronouncement of doom: the smug self-confidence of belong to the 'Churchy Club' and excluding others works for some.

Jonah went to Nineveh – eventually - and said what he was told to say. He didn't think that the response would be that **the people believed God, proclaimed a fast** and that **everyone both great and small would put on sackcloth**. Jonah did expect the result to be that **God changed his mind about the calamity that he said that he would bring upon them**. Read the next chapter to see how Jonah sulks with God precisely because the people believed his message and responded!!!

People like this read the passage we heard from Hebrews and they hear only the proclamation: **it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgement**. The assumption is that 'The Judgement' will be a negative experience: that need not be the case.

Jesus doesn't shy away from telling people to **repent**, but he goes on to invite them to believe the **Good News**. In fact, he goes further than that and says, **Follow Me**. Instead of pointing the finger or shaking the fist, Jesus calls his disciples into an apprenticeship.

There are at least two lessons we can learn about our own apprenticeship as Christians (and the challenge where we too apprentice others – rather than damning them):

- ✘ The call of Jesus recognises who we are and what we can become. To the fishermen, Jesus says, **I will make you fish for people** (not quite as easy off the tongue than the less PC *I will make you fishers of men*). An easy, yet powerful, metaphor.

As we walk with Jesus (and with one another) what is it that we become that makes us more fully ourselves? The call is to both follow and to do: to allow Jesus to take hold of what we can do or whatever skills we have and engage them in the service of God's growing Kingdom.

- ✘ The call of Jesus helps us sort out our priorities in life. Simon and Andrew **immediately left their nets and followed him**. James and John **left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and followed him**.

There are plenty of stories in the Bible of those who were less decisive – the rich young man; the man who would build bigger barns; or King Agrippa who was almost persuaded to believe – and probably never became Christians, or those who had better things to do.

We may not be called to leave things behind, but we are called to get off our behind!

There are no pranks as we begin as apprentice Christians! Just that clear, directive but sensitive call to follow – and to become like the master and gather our own apprentices.