

day, announcing that only forty days remain before doom arrives. The response of the entire city is rapid and complete: The entire human population fasts, "and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth" including the farm animals. God relents and does not bring harm to the city.

Jonah 3:1-5, 10 (NRSV)

¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ²"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." ³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Introduction

Mark offers the core of Jesus' proclamation, perhaps the title or tagline of every sermon Jesus preached -- God's kingdom has drawn near: repent and believe this good news! Jesus calls some fishermen to leave their livelihood and their families to follow him.

Mark 1:14-20 (NRSV)

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw

James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Introduction

This passage, directed to Timothy, encourages him (and by extension, us) to fight the good fight of the faith.

1 Timothy 6.11-19 (NRSV)

¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
January 25, 2009**

Introduction

Turning to and confidence in God alone -- not anxious action, not rulers, not business plans, not wealth -- bring deliverance.

Psalm 62.5-12 (NRSV)

- ⁵ For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
- ⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- ⁷ On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
- ⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.
- ⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
- ¹⁰ Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
- ¹¹ Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
- ¹² and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all according to their work.

Introduction

Jonah finally begins to fulfill his assignment to proclaim God's judgment to the people of Nineveh ("that great city"). He walks through about one-third of the city's streets on the first