

Preaching about the kingdom of God is urgent (Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20)

This week's readings challenge us to adopt a particular posture.

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January 19, 2018

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In our third Sunday after the Epiphany of Jesus, and the third week of a new year, the risk we run is to lose a sense of urgency. What's so urgent? Simply put, preaching about the reign of God—the kingdom Jesus came to establish.

The implications of preaching about this kingdom are many, as we see in our readings for this week. Jonah is sent to a dangerous and sinful city, an undesirable place. Jesus uses a very bold tone as he proclaims the good news, a tone that many people today would find quite offensive. (Not a lot of people—especially not the powerful—like to be called a sinner in need of repentance.) Paul strongly encourages the Corinthians to let go of human and material attachments—and let's be honest, it's hard to let go of our idols.

A sense of urgency is what keeps us focused, our sight placed upon the things that really matter—the things that reflect Jesus' kingdom. A sense of urgency is what challenges us to not be moderate or neutral on issues related to the perpetuation of violence, tragic inequities, and the dehumanization of minoritized bodies. A sense of urgency is about living in the ongoing tension between adapting to the demands of our world and adopting what Jesus' kingdom requires of us—which is a sign of trusting God without reservations.

The psalmist offers some guidelines for living in this tension, summarized in three key points:

- **Waiting in silence.** Our readings remind us that preaching about Jesus' kingdom will often lead us to undesirable places and uncomfortable situations, in which God seems absent and silent.
- **Hopeful posture.** When God seems absent and silent, we must remember that our hope does not depend on what is tangible or visible, but rather in believing in what is not a reality just yet.
- **Steadfast love.** Maintaining a sense of urgency is a form of love. Urgency is what makes us upset when the powers of evil are more visible than the signs of the reign Jesus came to establish.

The lectionary readings this week challenge us to adopt a posture of watchful urgency. And they challenge us to not be afraid to resist the evil and oppressive powers of this world by becoming signs of Jesus' kingdom: signs of patience, signs of hope, and signs of love.