Spirituality
Scripture for Life



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Timing is everything. Choosing the moment to do something says much about the decision and what we hope will flow from it. Matthew tells us that Jesus began his public ministry after hearing that the Baptist had been arrested (Matthew 14:1-12). When John was arrested, the riskiness of his style of preaching became palpably obvious.

Jesus had asked John for baptism and after he was baptized, he "was led by the Spirit" to the desert — the setting from which John himself had come. What we call his temptation could also be considered a time of discernment about the purpose of his life.

Then, when he realized that John's voice would no longer be heard, he took up the mantle in his own style.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 25, 2026

Isaiah 8:23-9:3
Psalm 27
1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
Matthew 4:12-23

Like John, Jesus preached metanoia, yet he did it in a different way. His message? The reign of God is at hand, get with it! Metanoia involved believing that message and putting its truth into action.

Seemingly right away, Jesus invited others to join him in spreading the message. He might have already known the first ones he invited — perhaps they had been disciples of John. Jesus' invitation to them was more than a call to metanoia. He invited these few women and men (more than are named) to consecrate their lives to making the reign of God obvious in the midst of their turmoil-torn, vulnerable world. The miracle? They did it!

It's hard to imagine what was going through those young people's heads. They were living good, ordinary lives, keeping their heads down under a repressive regime,

seeing all too clearly what happened to those who stepped out of line. Then they encounter Jesus who lives as a vivid incarnation of what the reign of God means. He preaches and heals all kinds of brokenness.

What's more, he tells those who would join with him that they can do the same. Even though they constantly wavered, they were devoting their lives, risking everything because they believed in his message and what it meant for them and their world.

While they may have occasionally dreamed that they were coming into prestige and power, their day-by-day experience of being with Jesus deflated that ambition time and again. They were on the road with a humble servant — very gradually understanding what he had invited them into.

Ironically, the demons and Jesus' enemies understood his message in ways the disciples originally failed to grasp. Everything that Jesus was doing threatened the power behind lies and domination. That's what made his mission so dangerous.

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Paul intended his message to the Christian community at Corinth to be, at the very least, a wake-up call. He had heard rumors about behavior unbecoming of disciples — rivalry, scorn of the poor, partisanship and much more. He minced no words in denouncing such conduct, reminding them that they were capable of much more: of being the body of Christ in their world.

What went on among the Corinthians is an ongoing temptation in every Christian community. We can think of the practice of our faith as something comforting and safe, even something that gives us a certain status.

That's hardly what Jesus' first disciples found, and it has nothing to do with what Jesus asked for and promised his disciples. (See Matthew 24:9: "They will persecute you and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name.") That was what Jesus invited the disciples into when he said, "Come, follow me!"

They would slowly learn that their status came from how they served, how they proclaimed the Gospel and tended to the wounded, the ill, the poor. Living their

mission, they would realize that the reign of God was becoming more and more visible among them. It was becoming real through them in ways that they never could have imagined and that it cost them nothing but their lives.

Looking at those first disciples challenges us. It's easy to go to Mass, to sing with a great choir and eat donuts with people afterward. There's no danger in that. But is that all that we are invited to as disciples?

There's a T-shirt recently promoted that displays the words, "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty." Advocating for peace, the recognition of the dignity of each person, for food and health care for everyone — within and beyond our borders — is not politics, it is Christianity in action. Supporting efforts toward peace belongs to our mission — even when it is neither comforting or safe.

Are we, too, capable of much more than we might imagine? What are our times calling forth from us?

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