

*Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” 17From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

*18As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 19And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” 20Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

*23Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.*

As I sat down to write this sermon on Friday I came to a most important realization – only 11 more shopping months before Christmas! Think I am a little early with this news? Give it a few more decades and we will be hearing about Christmas shopping year around. If the store owners could have their way, Christmas shopping would be a way of life for us. Every day a day to shop for Christmas – always.

Now Jesus has a different agenda – not shopping but repenting. “Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Now that might sound like a one time event. Jesus comes and calls us to one big change in our lives and from then on we are going down a new road. That’s the way it was with Peter and Andrew, James and John – they left their nets – their boats – James and John also left their father Zebedee and they followed Jesus. When Jesus called

them their whole life was changed. Or I think about Sue's uncle who was a missionary. He left his home in North Dakota and traveled to Papua New Guinea to build churches and schools. But most people do not receive such a call from Jesus.

Now Greek word for repent means "to turn". It is not a call to sorrow for sin but a call to change the way we think and act. "Change the way you think and act for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is what Jesus proclaimed.

Some Christians talk about the day they were born again. "My life was going along like this," they say, "but then I accepted Jesus as my personal savior and everything was changed. I was never the same again."

Now I have a dilemma today – if repenting is a one moment change – a one time call – then most of us will leave here today feeling like this gospel lesson today does not have much to do with our lives. We are not going to leave everything behind and fish for people. Maybe one or two you us might have our life turned upside down this morning but most of us will keep on living in the same house and voting for the same candidate and using our leisure time in the same ways. Even if we are not altogether comfortable with what is happening in our lives the big kind of change Peter ,Andrew, James and John made just seems impossible. That kind of change is for someone else.

But this word of God that Jesus speaks is for you and for me today. "Change the way you think and act for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Martin Luther spoke of this changing the way we think and act as an every day repenting – kind of like how the store owners want to make Christmas shopping an every day activity. In the catechism Luther asks the question: What then is the significance of such a baptism with water? He teaches us to answer: "It signifies that daily the old person in us with all our sins and evil desires is to be drowned through sorrow for sin and repentance, and that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

Every day a new beginning. Every day a changing the way we think and act. Every day we turn away from all the sin in our lives and begin again – newly washed in the forgiveness of Christ – new born in his forgiveness so that every possibility is before us.

Wednesday in the confirmation class we were thinking about the old person that is drowned in repentance each day and the new person that arises to live with God. Some of the words the class came up with to describe the old person were hurtful, angry, greedy, hateful, mean, murder, sinful, revenge, impure, anxiety. A few of the 18 words that they came up with for the new person that arises to live with God each day are loving, forgiving, funny, respectful, just, blessed, relieved, joyous, good, grateful. Every day there is a battle in this world between good and evil and that battle goes on in our hearts and mind, our words and deeds. Continually. Not repentance just for a season but daily.

If you are like me often this battle feels hopeless – like the old person is always winning. Trusting in God is so hard, just being my worst self so easy.

For you and for me this battle is hopeless, but not for Christ. Here at the table he feeds the new person in you with his own life – his body and his blood. All of his love, all of his faithfulness, all of his joy in life is in you. Believe in him with all your heart and all your life. He has already won the battle.

Yes, he has already won the battle – believe.