

**Date: January 21, 2018**

**Scripture: Mark 1:14-20**

**Title: “YES” TO GOD**

Wouldn't you agree that some things are so important that you need to act on them NOW?

A heavy rain had been falling as a man drove down a lonely road. As he rounded a curve, he saw an old farmer surveying the ruins of his barn. The driver stopped his car and asked what had happened.

The farmer said, “The roof fell in. Leaked so long it finally just rotted through.”

The stranger asked, “Why in the world didn't you fix it before it got that bad?”

The farmer replied, “Well, sir, it just seemed I never got around to it. When the weather was good, there wasn't a need for it, and when it rained, it was too wet to work on!”

Those of you who are homeowners know the perils of allowing home maintenance to slide. But that's true in all of life: In the things that really matter, there's a need to act with urgency.

Consider our lesson for today from Mark's Gospel. Mark tells us that Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, when he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, they were fishermen. Jesus said, “Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.” Mark says, “AT ONCE they left their nets and followed him.” Notice that it doesn't say they pondered his invitation. “At once they left their nets and followed him.”

Mark says, “When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. WITHOUT DELAY, he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.”

It's always amazed me, that the first four disciples of Jesus', responded to his call without any hesitation. He was asking them to leave their livelihood, leave their families, leave the community they grew up in, for an adventure, the result of which they couldn't see. They immediately heeded his call and followed him. That says a lot about how Jesus came across to people, but it also says much about them. And perhaps it says even more about the task he had called them to.

Mark shows us a Jesus who's in a hurry; a man with a sense of urgency. Someone has noticed that Mark used one word in his Gospel, more than any other. It's the word “immediately.” This word is used forty times in those brief 16 chapters of Mark's Gospel. The last thing Jesus wants is procrastinators. That's very clear in Mark's Gospel. But this isn't the only place Jesus expresses a sense of urgency.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gives the same opportunity to another man who's unknown to us. Jesus said, “Follow me.” But this man replied, “Lord, first let me go and

bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back, is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59-62). Jesus’ call is one of urgency. This is the way life is. The really important things require us to respond without delay.

**Consider how urgent it is that we demonstrate our affection for those we love.** Years ago when the original “Dear Abby” was asked what letter was requested the most for reprinting, she put into her syndicated column this one:

“Dear Abby: I am the most heartbroken person on the earth. I always found time to go everywhere else but to see my old gray-haired parents. They sat at home, loving me just the same. Now when I go to visit their graves . . . I wonder if God will ever forgive me for the heartaches I must have caused them . . .”

A great theologian, a man who has inspired millions of Christians, confessed a while back that he had been an profound failure with his own children. He laments, “How I wish, that when my children were young, I had spent less time with my books and more time with my family.”

**There’s an urgency about love.** Children grow up, so quickly. Time takes its toll in the aging process. There are some persons whose love we treasure today, who might not be with us tomorrow, or next week, or next year. If we’re going to take time to show our love for one another, we had better do it now. There’s an urgency about the really important things in life. One of those important things is demonstrating our affection for people we love.

You may know the story about the very bashful young man who was hesitant about demonstrating his affection for his sweetheart. He said one night, “Oh, but that I were an octopus, that I might wrap all eight arms around you.” His impatient sweetheart replied, “Don’t worry about having eight arms. Just make better use of the two arms you already have.” Sometimes there’s an urgency about demonstrating love.

**Sometimes, there can be an even greater urgency about altering a lifestyle.** There comes a time when a person must change his or her way of living and do it now.

Newspaper headlines have brought us tragic stories of the inroads that drug abuse has made into our society. Ball players, movie stars, children of famous political families, as well as ordinary citizens by the thousands, who are having their lives destroyed by this modern plague. Interestingly, it’s rural communities of this country which seem to be most under attack. How low does a person have to sink, how much money does he have to spend, how many people does he have to hurt, before he says, “Whoa, this is it, I’ve got to get control of my life?”

There comes a time when fighting a destructive habit or a debilitating weakness you must say, “I must stop now or it will be too late.”

There's a story of a man who waited until it was too late. His name was Judas. I wonder if Judas ever intended for Christ to die. I wonder if he ever thought it would go that far. Perhaps Jesus had said something that hurt or offended Judas. That happens sometimes in a church. Maybe Judas felt rejected by the other disciples. Perhaps it troubled him that he wasn't part of that small circle of disciples closest to Jesus, Peter, James and John, who were always there on significant occasions in Jesus' life. Could it have been simple jealousy? Judas may have said to himself, "I'll show them." But it may be, that he never intended for Jesus to be crucified. He cried out to the temple authorities as he tried to return their money, "I have betrayed innocent blood." They said with a sneer, as they turned their backs on him, "What is that to us?" Suddenly Judas realized that it was too late, and he went and hanged himself.

It's an awful thing to wake up and realize it's too late, too late to save your marriage, too late, you're hooked, you're addicted, too late, you've been caught, you've brought disgrace to your family and friends, too late, you've had that tragic accident. Do you see that there's sometimes an urgency about changing the way you're living? Stop, for God's sake, stop, an inner voice may be saying to you this morning, before it's too late. Many people put off making necessary changes to their life until tomorrow.

**And then, tomorrow never comes.** Tomorrow, Raphael would finish his painting of "The Transfiguration." But he died at age thirty-four with the painting only half-finished. Two of his disciples were forced to finish the master's work. Important things should never be put off. Life has a way of getting away from us.

Perhaps you know the story of a woman named Florence. Florence was married to a man named Oliver for 58 years before her death. They first got married in Sweden before immigrating to the United States some 30 years ago. After his beloved wife died, Oliver saw the need to put their home in order, and immediately started.

While doing so, he found a box, opened it and found some dishes, which he had never seen. He took the dishes to his eldest daughter and asked if she recognized them. Just like her father, she was surprised at seeing them.

Just about then, Oliver's second daughter came in. He asked, "Have you seen these dishes before?" She looked at the beautiful set of dishes, decorated with colorful paintings and gold. She too had no idea of the origin of the dishes.

As a last resort, Oliver decided to call his late wife's sister and ask about the dishes. Luckily, she did know the origin of the dishes. For years before her death, Florence collected these dishes piece by piece because she couldn't afford to buy a complete set. When the collection neared completion, she kept the dishes put away in hopes of using them during a special occasion. And because no "special occasion" came around, she chose to lock them away in the box Oliver had found.

Think how much joy Florence could have had displaying her beloved dishes to her friends and family. But she died with the dishes still in a box.

So it is with people who are always putting things off until tomorrow. So often, tomorrow never comes. If you love someone, tell them. If you're facing an important task, no matter how distasteful, tackle it. You're not going to enjoy doing it anymore, when you can no longer put it off.

**Procrastination heeding the call of God, is the most serious procrastination of all.** I challenge you to find one place in the New Testament where Jesus told anybody to "go home, think it over, and get back to me tomorrow." It simply doesn't happen. Jesus comes to Simon and Andrew and James and John at their fishing boats beside the Sea of Galilee and says to them, "Follow me," and immediately they left their nets and followed him. Jesus' invitation is always an invitation to do it now! That's especially true, with the call to follow Jesus.

There are some things in life that should not be put off. Telling people we love them is one of them. Correcting a destructive lifestyle is another. But the most important is saying "Yes" to God. Say YES to God today Trusting, Believing, and having an Active Faith in God making disciples of Jesus Christ in the transformation of the world. Amen.