

Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 21

The Collect and Psalm will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer. The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the Christian Standard Bible.

The Collect: Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

3 The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you.” 3 Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord’s command.

Now Nineveh was an extremely great city, a three-day walk. 4 Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!” 5 Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.

10 God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm: Psalm 62: 6-14

6 For God alone my soul in silence waits; *
truly, my hope is in him.

7 He alone is my rock and my salvation, *
my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

8 In God is my safety and my honor; *

God is my strong rock and my refuge.

9 Put your trust in him always, O people, *

pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.

10 Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath, *

even those of low estate cannot be trusted.

11 On the scales they are lighter than a breath, *

all of them together.

12 Put no trust in extortion;

in robbery take no empty pride; *

though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.

13 God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, *

that power belongs to God.

14 Steadfast love is yours, O Lord, *

for you repay everyone according to his deeds.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

29 This is what I mean, brothers and sisters: The time is limited, so from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none, 30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they didn't own anything, 31 and those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it. For this world in its current form is passing away.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

14 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God:

15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

16 As he passed alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 "Follow me," Jesus told them, "and I

will make you fish for people.” 18 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

19 Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat putting their nets in order. 20 Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord

On January 27 we celebrate the lives of Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, Witnesses to the Faith. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*

The commemoration of these three devout women follows directly on the observance of three of Paul’s male co-workers in the Lord. It is a reminder that though the first century was a patriarchal time from which we have very few women’s voices, the apostles and indeed the whole early church depended on women for sustenance, protection, and support.

Lydia was Paul’s first European convert. She was a Gentile woman in Philippi who, like many others, was attracted to Judaism. As what the Jewish community called a “God-fearer” she was undoubtedly accorded respect by the Jewish community, but still would have been marginalized. Paul encountered her on a riverbank where she and a group of women had gathered for Sabbath prayers. Undoubtedly Paul preached to them and Lydia “opened her heart” and, together with the whole household of which she was head, was baptized.

Lydia was a prosperous cloth-merchant and a person of means. She was able to lodge Paul, Timothy, and their companions in her house, which Paul used as a local base of operations (Acts 16:11-40).

Phoebe was the apparent patroness of the Christian community in Cenchreae near Corinth. She is the first person mentioned in the long list of Paul’s beloved associates in Chapter 16 of Romans. Paul refers to her as a “sister,” as a “deacon,” and as a “patroness” or “helper” of many. In other words, Paul includes her as part of his family in Christ and infers that she has housed and provided legal cover for the local church. Paul’s use of the word “deacon”

should be regarded with caution, since the diaconate as an order had not yet developed in the Church, but it does suggest the kind of ministry out of which the notion of ordained deacons developed. It would not be too much to call her a “proto-deacon.”

Dorcas (Tabitha in Aramaic) was a revered disciple in Joppa who devoted herself to “good works and acts of charity.” When she fell ill and died, the community sent for Peter, who came and, after prayer, revived her (Acts 9:36-42).

Though we have no record of the words of these three women, the apostolic testimony to their faith and their importance to the mission of the early church speaks for itself.

Let us pray: Filled with your Holy Spirit, gracious God, your earliest disciples served you with the gifts each had been given: Lydia in business and stewardship, Dorcas in a life of charity, and Phoebe as a deacon who served many. Inspire us today to build up your Church with our gifts in hospitality, charity, and bold witness to the gospel of Christ; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**