



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person*

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Sexton	John Bryant

✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Gospel and Prayers	Susan Evans

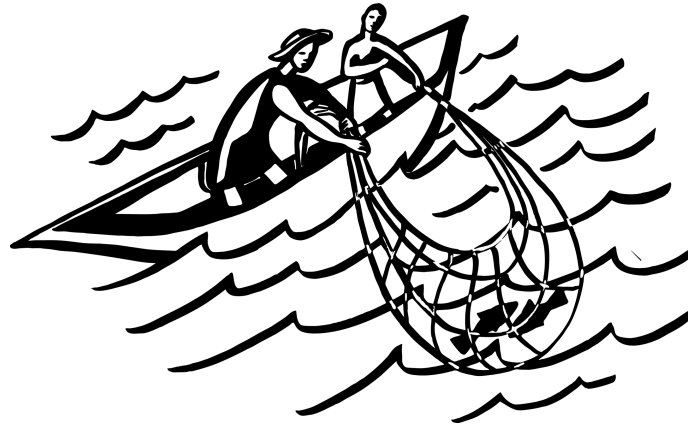
*This service of worship can also be heard online. Go to [queenannelutheran.org](http://queenannelutheran.org) and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.*

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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January 24, 2021

"Word Out" audio transcript



### Prelude

*Voluntary in D major*  
William Croft (1678–1727)

### Welcome

**P:** Welcome, this Third Sunday after Epiphany, to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the Good News through proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

As we continue through the time after Epiphany, stories of the call to discipleship show us the implications of our baptismal calling to show Christ to the world. Jesus begins proclaiming the good news and calling people to repentance right after John the Baptist is arrested for preaching in a similar way. Knowing that John was later executed, we see at the very outset what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls “the cost of discipleship.” Still, the two sets of brothers leave everything they have known and worked for all their lives to follow Jesus and fish for people.


### Apostolic Greeting


**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

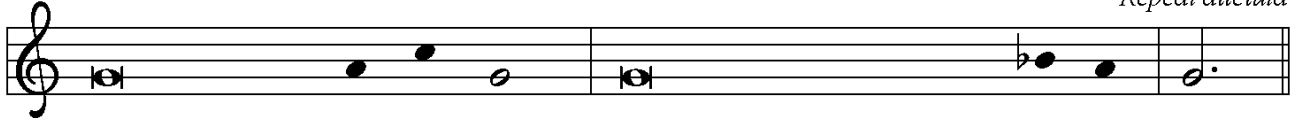
**G:** **And also with you.**

## Gospel Acclamation

Mark 1:15


**G:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**A:**   
*Repeat alleluia*

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;

repent, and believe in the good news.

**G:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

## The Holy Gospel:

Mark 1:16-20

**A:** The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the first chapter.

**G:** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

**A:** <sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little

farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**A:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**G:** Praise to you, O Christ.

## Sermon

*Why Follow Jesus?*  
Pastor Dan Peterson

I have never understood the beginning of Jesus' ministry, at least according to Mark and Matthew. Now when I say "beginning," I am not referring to Jesus' baptism or the temptation he undergoes in the wilderness. I am thinking, rather, of our Gospel reading for today, the passage in Mark where Jesus calls his first disciples.

Here's the problem: it doesn't make sense!

We heard the story. Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee. He sees two brothers, Simon and Andrew, who were fishing. He says, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." How, then, do they respond? They drop their nets and "immediately" follow him without any explanation whatsoever (Mark 1:18). Next Jesus encounters another pair of brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. He calls them, they drop the nets they were mending, and immediately they follow him – again without any explanation.

How do we explain such rash behavior on the part of the earliest disciples? In a moment, I will share with you, after hours of painstaking research, what I believe to be the *best answer* to the question of why the disciples immediately left everything to follow Jesus, one that sheds light as well on what it might mean for us to follow him today. But first, I would like to sketch a few fascinating alternatives I found along the way by briefly comparing Mark's account to the three other Gospels.

## The Other Accounts

Mark was the first Gospel to be written. Most experts place its composition between 65 and 70 of the first century, just before the destruction of the Jewish temple by the Romans. According to the dominant theory, Matthew and Luke

depended on Mark (in addition to several other sources) when they retold the story of Jesus about a decade later to different audiences. John, written last, bears no influence of Mark. It relies on sources completely independent of the first Gospel.

Matthew has the most in common with Mark. He tells us just as Mark does that Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, sees Andrew and Simon whom he calls. Then he sees and calls James and John, the sons of Zebedee. All four respond immediately to his call (Matt 4:20, 22). Matthew, however, leaves out a significant detail, one to which we will return shortly.

Luke deviates drastically from Matthew and Mark. He seems to recognize the problem: why would the first disciples follow Jesus without explanation? The details of the story change accordingly. Jesus never calls Simon, Andrew, James, or John from the shore. Instead, pressed by the crowd of people seeking to be taught and healed, he leaves the shore, gets into Simon's boat, addresses the crowd from there, and then instructs Simon to put them out over deeper waters and cast their nets for fish. Simon protests. He and his crew had been fishing all night but without any luck. He proceeds anyway, only to watch in amazement as the nets fill to capacity. Then Jesus says to him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people" (Luke 5:10). Notice the difference: Jesus calls no one from the shore. Instead, he simply declares that Peter will catch people. We hear nothing of Andrew or Zebedee. Luke wants us, it would seem, to hear something else, namely, an explanation for why these disciples followed Jesus.

It was a miracle!

John offers the same explanation, but the details and the setting differ sharply from Luke's account. The scene takes place on dry land with no reference to the Sea of Galilee, boats, or fishing for people. Andrew returns, however. Accompanied by an unnamed disciple, he approaches Jesus upon hearing John the Baptist call him the "Lamb of God" (John 1:36). Then he goes and tells Simon. The next day Jesus finds Philip and says, "Follow me." Philip tells his friend Nathaniel, who responds positively to Jesus after Jesus miraculously saw Nathaniel sitting under a tree when he was alone (Powell, *HarperCollins*

*Bible Dictionary*, 690). Like Luke, John provides an explanation at least for why *Nathaniel* became a follower of Jesus – it, too, was a miracle.

### **Additional Explanations**

Luke and John offer us something lacking in the accounts of Mark and Matthew: namely, a reason for why the first disciples would leave everything to follow Jesus. Perhaps they recognized the need for the story to supply an explanation rather than leave their audiences guessing. But I wonder: could there be other, more compelling reasons for why these fishermen suddenly became fishers of men? I submit there are, although even these have their shortcomings. Let me explain several of them.

The first is economic. Most people alive during the time of Jesus were poor. They lived in, with, and under conditions of extreme poverty. The disciples whom Jesus first called presumably belonged to this class, as did Jesus himself. He was a tradesman, and they were fishermen. As such, New Testament scholars tell us, in abandoning their profession they didn't have much to give up or lose. Almost any alternative would have been a better alternative.

By contrast, consider the rich man who approaches Jesus according to Mark 10. "Good teacher," he asks, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" You probably know the response. Jesus tells him to keep the commandments by naming six of them as examples. In turn, the rich man says, "Teacher, I have kept all of these since my youth" (Mark 10:20). Jesus answers by telling the man he must do one more thing: sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. "Then come follow me," Jesus adds. But the rich man can't do it. He grieves and leaves. Why? Because he had too much to lose. No wonder Matthew provides an addendum in his version of the story. There, following the rich man's departure, Jesus explains to his disciples the difficulty people of wealth will have in entering God's kingdom (see Matt 19:23-26).

They have too much to lose.

The economic explanation helps us make sense concerning why the first disciples were so quick to leave their profession – save one important detail. According to Mark 1:20, when James and John left their father Zebedee on the boat so they

could follow Jesus, they not only left him; they also left his employees, his “hired men.” This implies that Zebedee, as the Lutheran Bible scholar Mark Allan Powell observes, was “at least a moderately wealthy man” (1124). Indeed, Matthew lists his wife, “the mother of the sons of Zebedee,” as one of the women who provided (presumably financially) for Jesus. Why would she and her sons follow Jesus if indeed they had something (perhaps much) to lose? The point is simple: not all of Jesus’ followers were poor, which means they must have had other reasons for becoming his supporters and disciples.

Perhaps people followed Jesus, then, for political reasons. Jesus drew Simon the Zealot into his orbit. Maybe Simon was a violent Jewish revolutionary who sought to overthrow Rome and who expected Jesus to lead the way. Most biblical scholars, however, think otherwise. Such men would have unlikely associated with Jesus or the twelve, they indicate, and the term “zealot” could simply refer to Simon’s enthusiastic disposition.

If, therefore, economic or political motivations do not necessarily or entirely explain why the first disciples followed Jesus without hesitation, how else might we explain their response? Could it be, as Lawrence Wills observes in the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, that Jesus’ “method of calling [in Mark] is likely based on Elijah’s calling of Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21)? After all, “Jesus and Elijah both call followers; the disciples and Elisha both respond immediately, and they explicitly leave their parents in order to follow” (72). This similarity establishes continuity between Jesus and the prophetic tradition, although it merely deflects the question. Why did Elisha respond to Elijah’s call without giving it a second thought?

The Gospel of John provides one more possibility. There we have no indication of what the disciples, before following Jesus, did for a living. Perhaps they sought something altogether different than money or power. When Andrew and an anonymous disciple approach Jesus for the first time, he asks them what they seek. “What are you looking for?” he says (John 2:38). Could they be looking for purpose, meaning, or belonging, just like so many of us seem to be doing in a culture of increasing isolation and loneliness?

Imagine if Jesus asked you the question he asked Andrew. Maybe you are the anonymous disciple. How would you respond? What are you looking for?

### **One More Possibility**

There is probably some truth in all of the aforementioned explanations regarding why the first disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus. One answer remains, however, that I have been saving until last. I find it the most compelling. It's this: the people of Jesus' time desperately sought what many seek in ours. They sought hope, and Jesus gave it to them.

Think about it. Life expectancy was short. As Atul Gawande observes in *Being Mortal*, “[f]or most of our hundred-thousand-year existence – all but the past couple hundred years – the average life span of human beings has been thirty years or less. (Research suggests that subjects of the Roman Empire had an average life expectancy of twenty-eight years)” (32). Life in the first century was a short sprint from womb to tomb. The individual, moreover, felt as if he was in what the theologian Paul Tillich calls “the hands of powers, natural as well as political, which [were] completely beyond his control and calculation” (*The Courage to Be*, 57).

Is this not our situation too? We may have tripled our life expectancy thanks to modern medicine and hygiene practices, but consider the many other overwhelming threats that potentially spell our demise as individuals, as a nation, or even as a world. A pandemic rages. Violence threatens our democracy. Climate change advances at a rate beyond the gloomiest of scientific predictions. Could there be something in Jesus that would give us the hope and courage to face these threats just as the disciples of the first century faced theirs?

Jesus offers us a way: resist violence for the sake of reform. Be a peacemaker. Seek the truth, especially in a context of rabid conspiracy theories, and put the public good above personal interest. But he offers us hope too. After all, we know the end of his story. May that ending give us the hope to live out ours.

Amen.



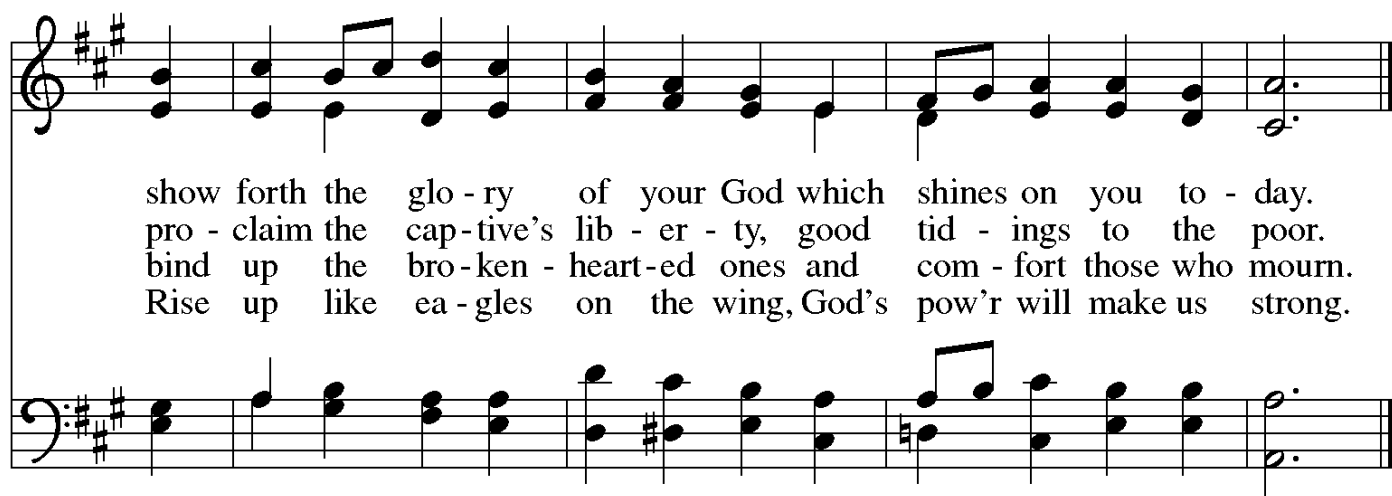
## Hymn of the Day

## Arise, Your Light Has Come!

ELW 314



1 A - rise, your light has come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;  
2 A - rise, your light has come! Fling wide the pris - on door;  
3 A - rise, your light has come! All you in sor - row born,  
4 A - rise, your light has come! The moun - tains burst in song!



show forth the glo - ry of your God which shines on you to - day.  
pro - claim the cap - tive's lib - er - ty, good tid - ings to the poor.  
bind up the bro - ken - heart - ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.  
Rise up like ea - gles on the wing, God's pow'r will make us strong.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

Music: FESTAL SONG, William H. Walter, 1825-1893

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## Prayers of the Church

**A:** Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

*A brief silence.*

**A:** For the church throughout the world, for pastors and teachers, for deacons and deaconesses, and for musicians and servers, all that proclaim the good news of God's reconciling love: Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** hear our prayer.

**A:** For skies and seas, for birds and fish, for favorable weather and clean water, and for the well-being of creation, that God raise up advocates and scientists to guide our care for all the earth:

Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** For those who provide leadership in our cities and around the world, for nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, for planning commissions and homeless advocates, that God inspire all people in the just use of wealth:

Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** For those who are sick, distressed, or grieving; for the outcast and all who await relief, that in the midst of suffering, God's peace and mercy surround them:

Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** For our congregation and community, and for all families big and small, that God's steadfast love serve as a model for all relationships:

Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

*A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.*

**A:** Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** In thanksgiving for our ancestors in the faith, whose lives serve as an example of gospel living, that they point us to salvation through Christ:

Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**G:** **Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

- P:** Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.
- C:** **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## Announcements

- P:** We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at [queenannelutheran.org](http://queenannelutheran.org).
- P:** Receive now the blessing:

## Benediction

- A:** Let us bless the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.
- P:** Almighty God, the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
bless and preserve you.
- C:** **Amen.**

## Dismissal

- P:** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
- C:** **Thanks be to God.**

## Postlude

*Fantasy on FESTAL SONG*  
Gilbert Martin (b. 1941)

### About Today's Hymn

Today's Hymn of the Day, "Arise, Your Light Has Come!" (ELW 314) marries a contemporary text by Ruth Duck (b. 1947) to a 19<sup>th</sup> century American hymn tune from New England. According to *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, this was the hymn text "that set Ruth Duck on her hymn-writing career." Duck's original aim was to revise "Rise Up, O Men of God!" (a hymn originally written for men of the Brotherhood Movement in the Presbyterian Church, in 1911) for use at the Ecumenical Women's Center of Chicago. (A different revision is included as ELW 669, "Rise Up, O Saints of God!"). Duck's hymn would ultimately go in a different direction thematically than its source material, but still be matched to the familiar tune of its predecessor; her text seems especially fitting for the Sundays after Epiphany. Now retired, Duck's multi-faceted career includes serving as pastor of several United Church of Christ congregations, as professor of worship at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and as president of the North American Academy of Liturgy. She is the author of several books about worship and about gender, and is the editor or co-editor of several collections of hymn texts. Four of her hymns appear in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (nos. 314, 445, 454, 575).

– Cantor Kyle