

**01/21/18 ..... 3B**

- *The time is running out...the world in its present form is passing away.* St. Paul expresses this idea here and in other letters (e.g., Thessalonians). He believed that the Lord would be coming soon to transform our world.
- That's why he speaks about those having wives acting as not having them and all the rest. We can't take this literally; it's poetic expression. But it does have an important point, even if the second coming was not at hand. Nothing lasts forever, and the things of this world will pass away.
- That's why we can't put too much stock in all the things of this world. For instance, we can't pretend that winning the lottery will solve all our problems. We can't even cling to those things we regard as important (e.g., our jobs) as having ultimate significance.
- These words of St. Paul have a particular meaning for me right now. That is because I'm announcing today that I will be leaving my position as Pastor here as of the beginning of July. I anticipate a new pastor will be named within the next month or so, though it may be later.
- I have been enriched by my experience here, and my leaving is not a reflection on this parish community. I will be taking another assignment, exactly what I'm not sure, except that it will not be another full-time pastor's position. (So I'm not "retiring," at 40 years of ordination).
- As we've been reminded the last couple of weeks, God's call continues to be given to us at various stages of life. Like those disciples in the gospel, we are all issued an invitation by Jesus.
- And we are called to respond, sometimes on short notice, like they did. That's not something, frankly speaking, that I'm terribly comfortable with, but at times that's the situation we face.
- To be open to God's call, we have to develop the skill of listening. And listening to the Lord requires spending time in prayer, in being in the presence of the Lord. That needs to be a priority in all our lives.

-- So we need to seek out those times and places in our day that are best suited to this, even if it's only for a few quiet minutes.

-- Also, if we are to be open to God's call, we must be detached from the things of the world. That doesn't mean we can't enjoy our possessions, but they can't rule us.

-- And even the people who are close to us in life cannot be the be-all and end-all of our lives. First of all, if we cling to them too tightly, we stifle their ability to grow. (e.g., parents who don't let children grow up)

-- Also, we know that in heaven (which is our ultimate goal) all relationships will be transformed. As scripture says in another place, in heaven "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

-- These facts are not an excuse to hide away from the world and its challenges. We as Christians are challenged to seek justice for all people and unity among ourselves. That is important to remember in this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

-- But we also know our call is not simply to make things better in our world. It is to proclaim the Kingdom of God which, in the end, only the Lord can bring about.

-- The particulars of that call will change over time. My calling will change significantly the middle of this year, but it will not end. I pray for the strength to answer that call in a new setting and a new stage of life.

-- I thank you for all the support you have given me during these six and one half years, and I pledge to be faithful to my calling here during my remaining five plus months.

-- May the Lord help each of you to answer his call as well, knowing that our ultimate goal is to be happy with the Lord forever in heaven.