

On July 20, 1969 at 4:17 pm Eastern Time, the NASA spacecraft Apollo 11 landed on the moon. Inside were two men: Lunar Module Pilot Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin, and Mission Commander Neil Armstrong. According to the history books, they had 25 seconds of fuel remaining.

For the next six-and-a-half hours, the two astronauts prepared for their extra-vehicular activity – that is, going outside of the Lunar Module, and onto the surface of the Moon.

The first man to set foot on the moon was Mission Commander Neil Armstrong. And his first words from the Moon were:

*one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind.*

Today we celebrate the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. And in this weekend’s Gospel, we hear Jesus’ first words of His ministry as recorded by the evangelist Saint Mark.

Were you paying attention? No, this is not a quiz.

He says, “*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.*”

For anyone listening, that’s pretty safe. Jesus isn’t asking anything of anybody ... yet.

But He then says, “*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*”

In about a month, we’ll hear those words again on Ash Wednesday. The scene will be one of penance. Violet vestments instead of green. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Yet right here, and right now, why do we need to repent?

The English word ‘*repent*’ comes from Old French, and means to “feel regret for a past failure.”

There isn’t much action in that. And perhaps we’d better look a bit deeper.

The Gospels are written in Koine Greek, and the Greek word that is rendered as ‘*repent*’ is μετάνοια (metanoia), which means “to change your mind” or to “change your heart.”

Digging a bit deeper, into the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Aramaic spoken at the time of Jesus, the word was תשובה (teshuva), which means “to turn back.”

Mainstream society is at odds with Christianity. Our baptismal call to live as disciples of Jesus demands that we live in a way that is counter-cultural.

Society speaks of punishment, revenge, and getting even.

The Gospel speaks of mercy, love, and forgiveness.

Society speaks of lying and cheating to get ahead.

The Gospel speaks of truth and honesty.

Society speaks of money, power, and authority.

The Gospel speaks of poverty, humility, and service.

Who among us hasn't forgotten the Gospel at some time? After all, “everybody's doing it.” But Jesus is not calling us to be just like everyone else. Jesus is calling us to a radical transformation in God.

Repentance is not something that we relegate to 40 days before Easter, and the rest of the year act as though Jesus was just a nice man whom we mis-quote to justify our bad behavior ... or a picture in the guest room.

We truly need to repent every day of our lives ... perhaps every minute, or every second, in our fast-paced world.

Turn back ... change your heart ... show regret ...

But don't stop there. Jesus doesn't stop at “*repent*.”

“*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*”

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us – with the help of God's grace – truly repent. No one here is perfect. And so, let us all turn back to the Gospel. Accept God's transforming grace, offered in this Most Blessed Sacrament, and change your minds ... change your hearts ... change your lives ... repent ... and believe ... in the Gospel.