



For some, like the disciples in the Gospel, this call will require a leaving behind - in religious life for example. But for most people, the call will not require a complete leaving behind, but an expanded vision of who we are, and our value in God's plan. It is a call that requires of us that we also take on an expanded vision of who others are as well.

The call of Jesus during this season of Lent, which begins with the symbol of ashes, is the same as that which Jonah carried to the people of Nineveh - it is a call to repentance, because the kingdom of heaven is close at hand; it is a call not to allow sin, and all the failures of life, to define us. But more than this, it is a call, through grace, to turn to Christ as a disciple.

Grace can be seen as a free gift offered to all – a river flowing from God where we may swim freely if we choose to – . Most, however, it seems prefer to spend their time fighting against the current, swimming in all directions in the attempt to find their own way. Because they swim against the current everything seems harder, confusion and uncertainty reign, no wonder people want to escape and start again. The Church uses a Greek word to describe the process of turning to swim with grace - 'metanoia' and it represents a true change in direction, a penitent change, towards Jesus Christ.

The urge to escape who we are often weighs very heavily upon us. But there are no real clean slates in this life: who we are is intimately bound up with those we live with, those who have cared for us or hurt us, with our community, with our work and pastimes. Reggie Perrin discovers this when when he realises he still loves his wife and in this discovery the seeds of success are sown.

The call of God's grace doesn't offer us a new identity, the fantasy life we may have always longed for. The call to be a disciple is a call to move to an even deeper understanding of who we are, who we are called to be, who those around us are called to be – it is a call to Love not selfishness.