

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 2021- THIRD SUNDAY OF THE EPIPHANY

JONAH 3: 1- 5, 10 (NRSV) CONVERSION OF NINEVEH

Jonah had two major problems – a problem with obedience and a problem with compassion

Obedience -

1: 1-3 – “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

What has it cost you to try to get away from the presence of the Lord?

Psalm 139: 8 (from last Sunday) – If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. For you is the fact that you cannot escape God’s presence a source of comfort or a source of frustration?

Raging storm – giant fish – growing bush – gnawing worm

How do you feel about the fact that God will use whatever it takes to get our attention?

What has God used to get your attention?

1: 13 – Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them.

It is very sad when those who are not followers of Jesus come across better than those who are.

Compassion –

¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ²“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

How do you feel about the fact that God will change His mind about what He will do?

Cf. intercessions of Abraham (Genesis 18: 22-32) and Moses (Exodus 32: 9-14)

4: 10-11 – “You are concerned about the bush. Should I not be concerned about Nineveh?”

PSALM 62: 5 – 12 (NRSV) SONG OF TRUST IN GOD ALONE A PSALM OF DAVID

⁶He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

⁷On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

David often spoke of God as his rock and fortress. Was he thinking of Masada?

Psalm 61: 2-3 – another Psalm of David – Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; for you are my refuge.

Cf. The Narrows at Zion National Park

I Samuel 24: 22 – after David’s close encounter with King Saul at En-gedi – Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:25 - 31 (NRSV) LIVING IN END TIMES

²⁵ I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

How do you feel about the fact that here Paul is saying, "I have no command from the Lord; I am giving my own opinion"?

²⁹ The appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, ³⁰ and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, ³¹ and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

What do you feel most urgent about? How important are the things that you feel most urgent about?

What for you would fall into each of these four categories?

Neither urgent nor important - Urgent but not important

Important but not urgent - Both urgent and important

MARK 1:14 – 20 (NRSV) THE FIRST FOUR DISCIPLES

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

First century A. D. fishing –

casting nets (Mark 1: 16) – dragnets (Matthew 13: 47-48) – trammel nets (Luke 5: 1-7)

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Jesus always had a wonderful way of talking to and with people in a way that they could relate to.

How do you do at talking with people about Jesus in a way that they can relate to?

Remember last week's Gospel from John 1: 35-42 - Simon Peter and Andrew are immediately leaving their nets and following someone whom they had already met.

When would you say you first met Jesus? When would you say you started following Jesus?

¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

When James and John left their father to follow Jesus, they left a lot.

John 18: 15-16 – Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.

Matthew 19: 22 – When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Matthew 19: 27 (after Jesus said that it will be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God) – Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"