

Friday, February 21, 2025
Read Jonah 1:1-3

Jonah

We all know the story of Jonah, or at least we know the part where the big fish swallows him and maybe we even know that he went on to Nineveh after the fish spit him out, but we can't get to any of that without our verses today. In the first three verses of the book of Jonah we find out the two ideas that are at odds with one another all the way through the book. The first thing we see is the Word of the LORD and we see the Word of the LORD come to a man named Jonah. We shouldn't move too fast past this point. It is incredible that the God of the universe would send His Word to anyone, and it is even more amazing when we realize that the reason that He sent His word this time is for the sake of a people that aren't even His called people. It is amazing that God sent His Word but there is another part of this story that is worth looking at. That is Jonah himself. When Jonah received this Word from God his answer was "no." Jonah heard in the most direct way the Word of God and he chose to do the opposite of what it told him to do. When the Word came to Jonah, Jonah worked against the Word. In what was probably a combination of fear and hatred Jonah chose to disobey God and flee from the calling that God had for him.

We can see ourselves in Jonah easily enough just from these verses without even looking at the rest of the story. We don't need to see anymore from Jonah to see our own disobedience in the face of God's Word. Our failure is obvious to us without the test of this story but if my fellow devotion writers will forgive me, I am going to spoil the ending. In the end of the story of Jonah it is now Jonah who gets his way but God. God wanted to bring His Word to the people of Nineveh and He did and when that Word got there it brought the whole people to repentance. God gets His way and that matters for us too. When God wants to bring mercy to people nothing stops Him. Nothing stopped our Lord when He came to bring mercy for us. Not even the tomb could stop the Word of God from going out for us. When we look at the story of Jonah, we can remember that God is at work and even our failure can't stand in the way of the Love that God has for us.

Prayer: Lord thank You for Your Word and for bringing us the message of salvation. Help us to follow Your commands and trust in Your promises so that we may be united with You in everlasting life. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, February 22, 2025

Read [Jonah 1:4-6](#)

“Without a Prayer”

Jonah was a successful, respected prophet. He'd told King Jereboam II that God had spoken, and that Israel should expand to its former borders in the north. Jereboam listened, and Israel grew to its “former glory”. So now, Jonah, the son of Amittai (Hebrew for “loyal” or “faithful”), had the king's ear.

So, what was Jonah thinking? This “son of the faithful one” thought he could buy a ticket away from the presence of the Lord! This prophet of the “God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land”, seems to think that by traveling over a lot of sea and to a different dry land, he'll be safely out of God's reach. And then, after boarding the ship and setting sail, he went below decks and fell sleep! If you were running away from God, could you fall into a sleep so deep you wouldn't even awaken when your ship encounters a hurricane?

The ship's sailors, though, were convinced. They were certain their ship was going down in this storm. I understand most sailors, even to this day, are very “religious” people – when things onboard go badly, they're the first to pray. And these sailors were no different. They were so certain of disaster they even threw the ship's cargo overboard. That cargo was precious! Their reputation and livelihood were on the line by doing this! (Remember in Star Wars – Jabba the Hut put a bounty on Han Solo's head for dumping his cargo to save his life?)

And so, that's when the ship's captain, shocked to learn about “sleeping Jonah”, approached him: “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.” This pagan has more faith than Jonah!

So where does this put Jonah? He's running away from God, doesn't want God to find him, and now his life and the lives of everyone depend on him praying to that same God! Jonah is literally, “without a prayer”!

All too often we think we can hide from God. We think that if no one else can see what we do in private, then God can't either. We think we can “pull one over” on God. And in our minds, we draw ourselves away from God; put up a barrier between us. Over time and later when we want to approach God, this chasm seems to have become too large to bridge, and we find ourselves, “without a prayer”.

But God wanted to bring salvation to thousands of Ninevites. And, He wanted His prophet Jonah to learn a little more about God's love for all people, including him. Just like Adam and Eve after sinning couldn't hide from God in the Garden, Jonah couldn't hide from God. God knew their sin (and our sin), and sent His Son Jesus to be that bridge to bring us back into His presence.

We pray: Thank You, God, that we cannot hide from You! Keep us in Your presence that we may turn to You in everything. Through Jesus, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 24, 2025

Read: Jonah 1:7-10

The Petulant Prophet

“I am a Hebrew, and fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Jonah 1:9

There is a real benefit to reading a familiar story slowly. I know that we are all familiar with Jonah, who is often called “the reluctant prophet.” Such a title seems far too generous.

You’ve probably found yourself at some point in life doing exactly what Jonah is doing here. Jonah is able to give an excellent answer about who he is. He speaks of His people, and he defines himself by pointing to worshiping the LORD, Yahweh, the maker of sea and land.

He knows the right answer. It makes no difference at all.

Why would Jonah make the crew go through the nonsense of casting lots? He knows the storm is a result of his disobedience. For that matter, how could Jonah endanger everyone else on the ship? He knows he is running from a direct word from “the God...who made the sea and the dry land.”

At times, we can absolutely have the right information, the right answer, the right knowledge – but totally ignore it. Jonah is more like “the petulant prophet” throwing a tantrum, refusing to act on what he knows, but he just doesn’t want to!

We are often tempted in the same way. We know what’s right – but we totally ignore it.

Consider how remarkable our Savior is compared to Jonah and us. He knew the will of His Father. He knew what was necessary for us and our salvation. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked His Father if there was another way, but knowing what was ahead, He went anyway out of love for His Father AND for us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive me. I have often known what You desired and yet refused. Forgive me, renew me, and shape my heart after Your own to willingly follow You, especially when it is hard. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Read Jonah 1:11-13

Lessons from Consequences

When I sin, there are consequences. And when I repent I am forgiven and Jesus has taken my sin and restored me to fellowship with God. I am so thankful for that. However, actions taken in the world still have consequences. Falling down still hurts, even when I repent while still falling.

In my very human selfishness, I want to complain to God about that. Surely if He has removed my sin and made me righteous, surely He will also remove the stain that sin has on my life (or so I want to believe). But NO! He doesn't change the world just to make me feel good. Indeed, I need that pain, the pain that follows my sin, the consequences that sin has brought about. I need to feel and train my body and thinking to realize that pain will follow sin. Then, well disciplined, my natural instincts (sin-contaminated as they are) will sometimes recognize the sin in my desires and I will avoid it.

So, as I face my consequences, I turn to God and thank Him; thank Him for saving me from my sin and thank Him for the learning experience I am facing. He doesn't just tell me "your fault" and drop me. He lives with me and so He experiences the pain with me, comforting me and guiding my reaction so that that pain actually teaches.

Yes, God teaches. He teaches with consequences, sometimes severe ones, sometimes just a painful memory; but His teaching works and I am grateful for them.

Prayer: O Lord, I hurt You so often and You still take me back and then teach me. Please let me appreciate your teachings. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Read Jonah 1:17

Three Days and Three Nights

There is something about Jonah here in this verse that has many people flustered: Was the fish a whale, a shark, a great big fish, a sea monster, a fish made specifically for Jonah— miraculously provided by Yahweh, etc.? Did Jonah live *in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights* without oxygen, without water and life sustenance? Was Jonah dead? Some think so, some think not. Some say Jonah was a mythological story or parable? Looking at Truth—God’s Word is Truth—God’s Word always reveals Truth—what we need to know for forgiveness, life, and salvation in only Jesus crucified and risen for sinners’ redemption.

Yahweh God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast lovingkindness desiring all men to come to the knowledge of the Truth in repentance and faith and be saved. True. Jonah was *in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights*. Jesus, The Son of Man, was “**in the heart of the earth**” *three days and three nights*. Jesus died on a cross, His body placed in a tomb, and rose from the dead on the third day. Jonah was swallowed by fish and returned from “Sheol-death” (see 2:2)—the inner parts of a fish on the third day. But what of Jonah and Jesus?

Pharisees wanted to destroy Jesus, following him with others out of the synagogue where Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Then, Jesus healed a demon-oppressed man—Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul and scribes and Pharisees wished to see *a sign* from God. Jesus said, “**An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**” (Matthew 12:39–40). Jesus speaks Truth, for it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, Jesus IS, declares, teaches, and fulfills Truth.

Jonah is not fiction according to Jesus, but True Word of God—True Biblical narrative that occurred in time for us to learn and received God’s Word through the prophet Jonah, fulfilled in Jesus. In Matthew 16:4, Pharisees and Sadducees again tested God asking for *a sign*. Jesus said again, “**An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.**”

Prayer – Lord JESUS, You conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave—destroying the power of the Satan for our salvation in Your death, burial, and resurrection on the third day as foretold and fulfilled. Grant us Your everlasting Peace in Your promised Word and steadfast lovingkindness and Truth, to share Your Truth with others. For Your live and rule with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God forever. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, February 27, 2024

Text: Jonah 2:1-9

Salvation belongs to the LORD!

It's easy for us to think of Jonah's time in the belly of the fish as an act of punishment – I mean, it must have been smelly and slimy and very unpleasant! But to Jonah, his being swallowed by the fish was not an act of punishment. Rather, it was an act of *salvation*. After being hurled into the sea, Jonah would have died. He was literally cast into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded him; all the waves and billows passed over him. He was going to drown – a victim of God's deserved punishment and wrath. But then God sent the great fish. Even when Jonah was actively disobeying God and earning for himself nothing but wrath and condemnation, God gave him salvation from the waves in the form of the belly of a fish. Jonah didn't deserve it, but God gave him salvation anyway.

And that's just the way it is with God. Salvation belongs to *Him*. He can distribute it however He pleases – giving it even to those who don't deserve it like Jonah. In this way, God distributes His salvation to us, as well. Even though we don't deserve it – even though our sin has earned us nothing but punishment and wrath – God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. As Paul says in Romans 5:8, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Salvation belongs to the LORD. And praise God for that. Because He distributes it freely through His Son to us and all others who follow Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, salvation belongs to You and You alone. Thank You for sharing it with me. Help me to live everyday in praise and thanksgiving for Your Son, Jesus, who delivers Your salvation. In His name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, February 28, 2025
Read Jonah 2:10

The Power of God's Word

“10 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.” (Jonah 2:10 ESV).

Before you read this devotion you should go back and read the entirety of Jonah chapter 2. The verse for today is the last verse of the chapter and it is God's answer to a prayer that Jonah prays in the first 9 verses of the chapter.

Jonah after he realizes his mistake and finds himself in the belly of the giant fish prays to God and recognizes that his salvation has to come from God. God's answer to Jonah's prayer is simple and effective. God speaks to the fish, and it spits Jonah up onto the dry land. If it wasn't such a strange thing it would almost seem like an anticlimactic way for Jonah to escape the giant fish. It seems strange that after one of the most beautiful prayers in the Scriptures the answer from God is only one verse. This verse even though it is short actually tells us a lot about God. In this verse we hear that God spoke and something happened. Along with this we see God work to care for one of His creatures.

God's Word is powerful, and when God speaks a Word things happen. God spoke all of creation into being and later our Lord Jesus spoke, and people were healed, and sins were forgiven. And God works for the good of His creation and specifically God works for good for His people. Jonah was God's chosen prophet and while God had to get him back in line when he ran away God still cared about what happened to Jonah and He still cared about what happened to Nineveh. God cares about His creation, and He uses His Word to care for it. God still uses His Word to care for His creation and now we get to be a part of that. As God's people we get to go out and carry the Word of God with us and share it with those who need it because we know that it has the power to help those who hear it. We know that God's Word is powerful, and the message of Jesus brings life. We have the chance to be like Jonah after the fish spits him out but we get to go willingly and share the news of our Savior.

Prayer: Lord thank You for Your Word. Put Your Word into our hearts and help us to live according to it and boldly share it with those whom You send us to. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, March 1, 2025

Read [Jonah 3:1-5](#)

“Thy Will be Done”

It’s nice to be given a second chance. We’ve all made bad choices in our past – you know, those ones you wish you could go back and redo? A used car you bought, a bad house, a “friend” that you now wish you’d never met? We’ve all thought, “If only I could go back and try again, it’d go better.” In our reading, we hear how perfectly Jonah’s story would have gone if only he’d listened to God the first time. Instead of being four chapters long, Jonah’s story would be fully told in these five verses.

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”” The first time, Jonah had followed his own will. He was God’s prophet; he knew what God wanted. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was the “New York City” of the Iron Age. It was about 2 ½ miles from one side to the other and was home to 120,000 people. They’d been sinning against the LORD and their great evil had gotten His attention. And God’s will was for Jonah to go and tell them to repent, that they may be saved.

The Bible doesn’t explain why, but Jonah didn’t want these enemies of Israel to receive God’s grace. He wanted them to be destroyed by a wrathful God. And he knew that if he preached repentance to them, they might repent, and he knew that God would show them mercy. Jonah didn’t want that. His will was for them to suffer eternally for their deeds.

But God’s will is for “all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” So now, when given a second chance, Jonah demonstrated to us what happens when God’s will is done. Jonah went to Nineveh and planned a three-day preaching campaign. It was a big city and he knew it would take a lot of work to preach God’s message. However, after the first day of proclaiming “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown”, the Ninevites took God’s Word to heart: they believed God, proclaimed a fast, and all of them covered themselves in sackcloth and repented.

Remember how we’ve all made bad choices in the past? Isn’t it wonderful that God’s will is for all people to be saved? He demonstrated more mercy for me when He made me His child than my will is capable of. I like to think I’m pretty merciful, but I’m not. But God sent His Son to save me when I was His enemy! Think about Jonah’s story the next time you pray the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done”.

We pray: Merciful Lord, Your will is greater than my will. I’m petty, vengeful, and mean. You didn’t send Your Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, March 3 2025

Read: Jonah 3:6-9

Fasting

“By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.”

Jonah 3:7b-8

In two days, we will observe Ash Wednesday and begin Lent – a whole season associated with fasting. Sometimes fasting is criticized as trying to please God out of our own exercises. On the other hand, sometimes fasting can just be a show for others around us. That’s a trap we can fall into by “giving up something for Lent,” and then CONSTANTLY informing everyone around us about the great sacrifice we are making by not eating chocolate or skipping Starbucks or jumping off of Facebook or Instagram.

But these temptations to abuse fasting, often lead us to another temptation – never fasting at all. But Jesus assumed that we would fast, and He gave us instructions for it (Matthew 6:16-18 – part of the Gospel for Ash Wednesday). All the Ninevites, even the animals were commanded to fast, not to please God with their fasting, but to help them turn from their evil ways and violence. Beyond this, sitting in sackcloth and ashes was a way of proclaiming before God – “I’m dying, and my only hope for life is if You save me.”

When we fast, we are reminded that there is something better beyond the here and now. When we abstain from the things of this world (even for a time) – whether food, television, or anything else that we enjoy or need – we become more aware that we have relied too heavily on these earthly things.

Jesus is our true bread from heaven – our true nourishment. Fasting serves God’s call that draws us to look to Jesus, to receive Him in faith, to trust in Him alone for rescue and life, and to enjoy all the blessings that He gives us.

Prayer: Father in heaven, forgive us for seeking comfort in our food and other possessions. Turn our hearts to Your Son, Jesus, who satisfies the longing soul with eternal goodness. Amen.

A Few Tips for Lenten Fasting (that is Giving Something Up)

1. Fasting is a devotional practice. That means it is optional, not a command. Consider doing it to point you to Jesus, not as a means of personal improvement.
2. If you decide to fast, when you are reminded of what you’ve given up, this should lead you to pray something simple like, “Dear Jesus, thank You for this reminder of the far greater sacrifice You made for me. Forgive me for trusting in other things more than You, and draw me closer to You. Amen.” (Maybe even write down a prayer like this where you will frequently see it.)

3. Make your immediate family aware of what you're fasting from, but likely no one else needs to know.
4. Seek not to draw attention to yourself. Look to Jesus.
5. When thinking about a Lenten fast, besides giving up earthly pleasures, consider giving up time to be in God's Word more and reflect on Your Savior who gave up all for you.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Read Jonah 3:10

Mercy for "Big" AND "Small" Sins

How infinitely deep I find God's mercy to be! He forgives, not only the "small" sins but deeply engraved sins for those who repent. How can He be so merciful? How can He put up with such outrageous behavior only to let repentance stave off consequences?

For one thing, there is no such thing as a "small" sin, a small rebellion against God. You are either in rebellion or not. So, what I see as 'small' is only my judgment, not God's. The distinction between "small" and "great" in sinning is my idea, not God's. Then I realize that I want to think that my personal sin is "small" so I don't need to repent as much - or in God's eyes, at all! So my shock is merely window dressing to try to hide my own sin.

But wait, why does God forgive any sins? The reason lies in repentance. Not in a "I want out of the effects" nature, but in "I don't want to do that kind of thing ever, especially not again." Repentance is not regret. Repentance is a change of nature, a change I get when God intervenes and changes me.

And that gets me to the point. God changes me because Jesus died and rose for me! So, He died for my 'small' sin and He also died for that other one's "great" sin there is no difference between us. He paid the price for them all. For me, the importance is "He died and rose for me." He brought me repentance and then salvation. Amen.

Prayer: Thank You God that You and Your actions are not dependent on my understanding or agreeing with them. Thank You and Praises for forgiving me! Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Read Jonah 4:1-3

The Relenting Steadfast Lovingkindness of Yahweh

God relented from evil/disaster He would have brought on the Ninevites because they turned from their evil way. To Jonah, it was a great evil and **“displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry”** (v. 1). Jonah was angry because he **“knew that [Yahweh is] a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting [נִחַם-*nekhom*, change of heart, relent] from disaster [evil].”** Jonah prayed to Yahweh to take his life, for knowing His gracious slowness to anger and steadfast lovingkindness was for Ninevah. This was Jonah’s knowledge and word to himself in his land. That is why Jonah fled to Tarshish; he knew that Yahweh was a gracious God Who relents from disaster upon those who turn to Him.

Yahweh God desires all men to repent and be saved. To believe and know the Truth in His steadfast lovingkindness, the good-Word-message of the Messiah of Yahweh, the King of all creation. However, Jonah would rather die in his anger over God’s relenting disaster to Ninevah and begs Yahweh to take his life, **“Please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live”** (v. 3).

Looking back, we see Jonah’s cry from the belly of the fish, **“I called out to [Yahweh], out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice ... Salvation belongs to the Lord!”** (Jonah 2:2, 9). And Yahweh God, in His mercy and grace and steadfast lovingkindness for Jonah, spoke to the fish, which vomited Jonah out upon dry land.

Yahweh God’s mercy is for all mankind to have salvation, for *He is Salvation*—JESUS. Salvation belongs to Him, whether we like it or not, whether it angers us or not. Jesus came to save you and me from death for our sins that we owed in death—The death of Messiah Jesus hanging naked on a blood-stained cross paid the full price for our sin.

Jonah did not have Western Christianity’s tenth-century (900-999 AD) tradition of Ash Wednesday in mind. Yet, the promised Messiah, the True Christian teaching of faith and repentance—turning from our evil ways. We see repentance with the Ninevites, who repented and turned to Yahweh God in sackcloth and ash. God’s Law convicts us of our evil and sin that convicts us, and we turn to Yahweh God in Christ, Who forgives us continually. God has poured-out all the punishment/wrath for our evil and sins upon the incarnate Eternal Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ and Word of God, the new Adam crucified on our behalf.

Prayer – Lord JESUS, You suffered, bled, died, and atoned for our sin fully and completely. As we struggle with the old Adam and our sin, always turn our hearts to Your grace and mercy in Your death and resurrection. For You are slow to anger and abound in steadfast lovingkindness. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Text: Jonah 4:4

And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

Living Well

Let's paint the scene. Jonah entered the sinful city of Nineveh and proclaimed God's message with a heavy heart. But his heart wasn't heavy because the city was too scary or sinful. His heart wasn't heavy because the message he was to deliver was too cruel or demanding. Instead, his heart was heavy because he knew the God he was speaking for. He knew that God is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." He knew that if the sinful people of Nineveh repented and turned to the LORD, God would forgive them and save them from destruction. And that's exactly what happened. Not liking this outcome, Jonah became very angry.

It's in this moment that God speaks the words that we read today, "Do you do well to be angry?" The answer to this question is obviously "no" – you know it, I know, Jonah probably knew it. But why?

Actually, we've already answered our question. A couple of verses earlier in our text (and earlier in our devotion) Jonah acknowledged who God is – He is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." God wasn't angry with the people of Nineveh. So, neither should Jonah be angry. Instead, God showed love and compassion to the people of Nineveh. So, Jonah should do likewise. In every way, as a follower of the LORD, Jonah should try to imitate Him.

So it is with us. Throughout the course of our daily lives, we experience things that can make us angry, but in such situation, we would do well to ask ourselves, "How would YHWH respond?" Unlike Jonah, today we have the benefit of knowing Jesus – YHWH in flesh. How did He live? He embodied grace, mercy, love, and compassion to all – especially through His sacrifice on the cross. In all situations, He desires grace, mercy, steadfast love, and peace. Let us, with our own lives, try to imitate our LORD.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. You desire to relent from disaster that all might come to know You and trust in You. Thank You for the infinite mercy You have shown to me through the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus. Help me to live my life in a way that reflects Your love and honors You. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, March 7, 2025

Read Jonah 4:5-8

The Problem with Wanting Things Our Way

“5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, until he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’” (Jonah 4:5-8 ESV).

Our text for today ends on a rather pessimistic note but there is still a lot for us to learn here. When I think about my own life there have been many times when I have been a bit like Jonah and wanting to set myself up somewhere and have everything go just how I want it to. I love to have my own way just like Jonah and when I don’t get it, I also get a bit frustrated, and usually I try to throw my frustration at whatever or whoever is around me. On the other hand, Jonah is “exceedingly glad” when he is blessed by the plant that God sends for him.

This text shows the back and forth of our sinful nature in the emotions of Jonah. But that isn’t the only thing that it shows us. This text also shows us the attentiveness of God in His creation. God has all of creation to worry about but still, He worked in the plant and the worm and the sun and the wind. As God’s people, there is a lot of hope to be found in the reality that God is in control and that there is nothing so small that He isn’t holding it together. We live in a world that is messy and we want our own way in the mess but thanks be to God that we are now His people bought with the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ which means that if God is ruling all things then we can be sure that He is ruling all things for us even if we don’t always see how that can be. God is at work through every plant and worm and wind to rule this creation according to His will which includes your salvation and eternal life with Him.

Prayer: Father, be with us as we go through this life and live in this world. Help us to trust in Your gracious work and believe in the promises that You have made us through Your Son Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Read [Jonah 4:9-11](#)

“Unforgiveable”

I taught a confirmation class shortly after our country was attacked on 9/11. We were talking about forgiveness; about how it’s relatively easy to forgive someone you know and care for. You can forgive your repentant child, or your Mom, because you love them and know they love you and are sorry for what happened. But how about forgiving your enemy? I asked them if they could forgive Usama bin Laden – the “mastermind” behind those attacks that had killed thousands of innocents. The kids were shocked that I would even suggest forgiveness for him!

We can each easily picture someone in our mind that we cannot forgive. My uncle, who fought the Japanese in World War II, never bought a Japanese car. Ever. Adolf Hitler would top many people’s list. Some of the illegal immigrants who have committed rapes and murders here in our country are easy to not forgive. Jeffrey Epstein, the man who purportedly used young girls to provide sexual favors to his rich and powerful friends, probably remains unforgiven by many of his victims.

These are the kinds of thoughts that went through Jonah’s mind, as he angrily mourned the loss of his shade plant and wished that God would kill him. God had forgiven the entire capital of Israel’s mightiest enemy! Their sin had stunk so strongly that God had sent Jonah across hundreds of miles of desert to preach to them. They worshipped false idols, sacrificed children to their pagan gods, and attacked their neighboring countries – killing most and carrying the rest into captivity.

And what did God say to Jonah? “Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” Not only did God care for these enemies of Israel, He cared for and loved these enemies of He Himself enough to bring Jonah to them. God even wanted to save their cattle!

We might not love our enemies like God does, but we carry that same stink ourselves. We might not be mass murderers, or terrorists, or people breaking the laws of another country, but our sin smells equally rotten to God. And what did God say about this? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The sign of Jonah was that, as Jonah was swallowed by the fish, Jesus disappeared into the depths of hell. As Jonah hid from God, Jesus was forsaken by His Father. And as Jonah was saved from death; Jesus saved us from eternal death.

We pray: Gracious God, thank You for having mercy on me, a sinner. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson