

+ Is Jonah More than a Big Fish Story ?



+ The People of Mount Zion-Finksburg, Maryland +

Wm. Louis Piel Pastor + Leslie Gabler, Director of Music
Ushers in May Lois Pulket & Judy Piel, Worship Assistant Judy Beck,
Morning Prayer Leslie Gabler

The Seventh Sunday of the Easter Season + May 21, 2023 + Worship 9:55 a.m. +
Message of New Life in Christ Jesus

+ A Thought Before We Begin +

The Book of Jonah is one of the twelve minor prophets of the Nevi'im in the Hebrew Bible, and as a book in its own right in the Christian Old Testament. The book tells of a Hebrew prophet named Jonah, son of Amittai, who is sent by God to prophesy the destruction of Nineveh, but tries to escape this divine mission.

We Gather "This Is the Day That the Lord Has Made" + Hymnal #657

Opening Prayer

Hymn "To God Be the Glory, Great Things God Has Done" U.M. Hymnal #98

Our Worship Theme Today Concerning the Hebrew Prophet Jonah
"When God comes calling do we run the other way?" Judy Beck, Pastor Lou

Opening Words (Unison)

God...you call us...and sometimes...we duck under the table...
hoping you didn't notice us when you walked into the room.

You call us...and sometimes...we grab a stapler and a stack of paper
trying to look too busy to be bothered at the moment.

You call us...and sometimes we just say, "No!"
We know that we aren't expected to do everything...
but we often forget that you call us to be ourselves
in the places where our very self is what is most needed.

So give us the grace to say "Yes" to your call...
even now...be with us as we allow the story of Jonah to speak to us.
Amen.

Video "In the Bulb There is a Flower" (Cheryl Jackson, Accompanies Crystal Schau)

We Welcome our Children

Even if we do not have children in congregational worship we remember all God's children.

"The Faith We Sing" songbook #2233 **"This, this is where children belong, welcomed as parts of the worshipping throng. Water, God's Word, bread and cup, prayer and song. This is where children belong."**

Informal Moments + Reception of our Tithes & Offerings

Offering Response (Hymnal #94) **"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"**

Anthem "I Go to the Rock" + The Faithful Few

Where do I go when there is no one else to turn to? Who do I talk to when no one wants to listen? Who do I lean on when there's no foundation stable? I go to the Rock, I know that's able, I go to the Rock."

"The major theme of the book is God's mercy. Jonah is sent to preach to the wicked city Nineveh, but flees in the opposite direction because he knows that the Lord is "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent in punishing" (4:2). Jonah, a rebellious prophet who fled from the Lord's command, only to be delivered by a big fish and bring about the repentance of Nineveh needs to learn that God's mercy and love are not just for the chosen people but for all sinners, even those whom Jonah has reason to hate.

Commentary #1 "God calls and Jonah Runs Away" – Jonah Chapter One

Morning Prayer + Prayer Leader Leslie Gabler

Our Prayer Song ("Sweet Hour of Prayer" U.M. Hymnal #496)

**"Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes know. In seasons of
distress and grief, my soul has often found release, and oft escaped the tempters
snare, by thy return sweet hour of prayer."**

Forgiving God, like Jonah we resist when asked to tell the story.

We find it hard to confess the name of Jesus.

We are awkward and feel inadequate.

But you have called us to speak and to act.

**Like Simon and Andrew, James and John,
help us to rise up and follow wherever you lead.**

**Forgive us our reluctance to open our doors,
open our hearts to others; some like us, some not.**

**We repent of our hesitations and unwillingness
to witness to those we have considered strangers and even enemies
for fear they just might become friends. Amen.**

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.**

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary #2 “Jonah’s Prayer from the Belly of the Fish” –Jonah Chapter Two
Reading Forgiving God, like Jonah we resist when asked to tell the story.

Song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” – “The Faith We Sing” songbook #2129

Commentary #3 “The Bush, the Worm, Jonah Wants to Die,
and God’s Final Words” - Jonah – Chapter Three

A Final Words(Below)

“The major theme of the book is God’s mercy. Jonah is sent to preach to the wicked city Nineveh, but flees in the opposite direction because he knows that the Lord is “a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent in punishing” (4:2).Jonah, a rebellious prophet who fled from the Lord’s command, only to be delivered by a big fish and bring about the repentance of Nineveh needs to learn that God’s,mercy and love are not just for the chosen people but for all sinners, even those whom Jonah has reason to hate.

Our Closing Song “God Be with You till We Meet Again” (U,M .Hymnal #672)

Closing Blessing (Pastor

Go now as God’s chosen witnesses

Go now to testify that Christ has been raised and that we are raised with him.

Do not look for Jesus among the dead, but be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

And may God raise you from all that would entomb you;

May Christ Jesus call you by name and go ahead of you;

And may the Holy Spirit empower you for all that is good.

Musical Postlude + Leave this place but don’t forget to take Jesus with you!

+ + + + +

Jonah

Opening- Judy #3

We would like to tell you a story. A fish story. It is an old story
A very old story, about 700 years before the birth of Jesus.

When you hear the word Jonah you often think of a whale, that is a very big fish, big enough to swallow a whole person.

The story of Jonah, who was a prophet, is the story of a good man who wanted to run away from the Lord because he didn't like what the Lord told him to do.

And that is the story of many of us. Saying we believe in God, but actually running away from God because we don't want to do what God wants us to do.

Lou #4

The story that Judy is talking about is found in the Hebrew Scriptures simply called "Jonah." Our hope is that you have already the 4 chapters. Actually it is easy reading, and in some places a little humorous. A person like me and you who wants to run away from God because we don't want to do what God calls us to do. "Follow me" says Jesus, and we say, not so sure. We love you Jesus, or at least we say we love you but we aren't so sure about all of your teachings especially about forgiveness.

#5 Prayer + Lou – On the screen – Unison

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We know that we aren't expected to do everything...
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in the places where our very self is what is most needed.
So give us the grace to say "Yes" to your call...
even now...be with us as we allow the story of Jonah to speak to us.
Amen.

#6 Video

#7 Commentary #1

Judy

This is how the story begins. The word of the Lord came to the prophet Jonah. The Lord knew this would be a challenge for Jonah but the Lord still asked Jonah to be faithful. The Lord wanted to save the wicked people who lived in Nineveh. By the way Jonah hated the wicked people who lived in Nineveh. Jonah didn't care if they burned in hell. And the story goes on.

Lou

Commentary Jonah 1.1-

Closes with the big fish story

#8 Video

#9 Commentary #2

Judy

The last time we were with Jonah things were going bad, I mean really bad. The Lord was upset that Jonah not only did not obey the call, but actually tried to run away in the opposite direction. Jonah was in a boat along with sailors about to perish into the sea. The sailors found out that Jonah was the problem with the wind and high seas because he was trying to run away from God. The Jonah did something very nice, he told them to throw him into the sea. Since he was the problem he would give up his life to save the others. And now comes the big fish story.

Lou

Commentary Jonah 1.12-2.10 (the fish)

#10 reading – Judy

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Forgive us our reluctance to open our doors,
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to witness to those we have considered strangers and even enemies
for fear they just might become friends. Amen.

11. Commentary #3

Lou

Now we come to the ending of the story, but first Judy needs
to read you one line.

Judy

“From chapter three

The word of the Lord came once again to Jonah, a second
time and after being swollen by the big fish Johan decides to do what
the Lord want. It is not what he wants but he is lucky to be alive so he
does not what he wants but what the Lord wants.

Let me read the word from Holy Scripture

“Jonah walks around the city of Nineveh three times shouting, Forty
days more and the city will be over thrown.

Then something happens that really upsets Johan, the people believe
the Lord, they proclaim a fast, put on sack cloth and ashes and ask
for forgiveness.

And now we tell the rest of the story;”

#11 – Lou + Chapter3-end

Key lines 3.9-11.

Lou – forgiveness

Matthew 6.14

Right after the Lord’s Prayer

“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors”

“For if you forgive others their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing

#12 Video