

After writing this morning's sermon originally, I recognized that instead of our usual pattern of beginning with the Old Testament seeking fulfillment in the Gospels, we might recognize that Jesus Calls all the world to receive what had always been present, throughout the Old Testament. SO today we begin with the Gospels, then to receive the Hebrew Scriptures.

In Mark everything is IMMEDIATELY, and the text is more brief than any other, brief which is also dense; in these 5 verses, every phrase has meaning.

The most familiar part of this passage is Jesus Call to Andrew and his brother Simon who would be Peter, and to James and his brother John, the Fishermen, to become Fishers of Men and Women. Reviewing other versions of this text, one translation lumped all four disciples together as brothers, identifying JAMES's Son as Zebedee; when historically as written here: James and John were the Son's of Zebedee, and Andrew and Simon who was renamed Peter were another set of brothers, all of whom were commercial fishermen. Growing up in the church, I always assumed that the 12 Disciples got along. But thinking this through, How much in common did LEVI the Tax COLLECTOR have with FISHERMEN, PHARISEES, and with JUDAS?

Also, imagine the competition of commercial fishermen, who worked all their lives on the same lake. Those are the ones who stole our fishing spot! They got the best bait! They insulted us!

Calling all 4, Jesus is calling them/Calling US to set aside current rivalries, to work together.

Before coming to Arizona, we had always lived near lakes and I love Fishing, but what is identified here is an entirely different activity. This is neither Fly fishing, nor Bait fishing. This is not a solo or sedentary hobby, this is a Commercial activity with every person involved having specific physical responsibilities. Our whole community's survival depends on each one doing their task. One fisherman would be responsible for MENDING the NETS, which get fouled with debris in the catch, get torn on the bottom of the sea, and the nets need to be emptied of the catch. These are fine motor-skills, as they reweave nets. The other is the NET CASTER, whose responsibility is to throw the entire net outside the boat, high enough for the net to open like an umbrella, then gather together, catching everything in the net's path and drawing the net full back for the MENDER to unpack and restore. The two are very different skills. All of us who have siblings or multiple children are aware that despite sharing the same DNA, brothers or sisters, do not think alike or behave according to the same rules. What Jesus is asking, Calling pairs of brothers, is that even within families, they will work now together, forgiving the past and setting aside their differences.

The element of this passage which is routinely overlooked, is that Jesus did not suddenly advertise for Fishermen to become Fishers of People. After his Baptism by John the Baptist, having spent 40 Days in the Wilderness being tempted, Jesus learned of John's arrest, and Jesus took up John's own Calling, declaring "THE TIME HAS COME! THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR. REPENT & BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS!" Jesus Calling others to follow, is a recognition of Greater Priorities. In daily life, we have our conflicts. When circumstances overwhelm, we often adopt blinders seeing the world only from our perspective. In the competition of business for profit or survival, we can become cut-throat and vindictive.

When our family, our people, our church, have been insulted, threatened or terrorized, we may teach our children prejudice and hate to perpetuate after us.

JESUS IS CALLING US to a different Time, a higher Priority, Something far more important.

The Time has Come. The Kingdom of God has come near! Today is different from yesterday. Everyone is needed!

2nd: The Hebrew people had a unique understanding. Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Europeans, Russians and Americans each perceive reality/the world, from our Nationalistic identity. The

Hebrews were NOMADS, NO PEOPLE, then made into SLAVES, who later experienced FREEDOM, becoming a PEOPLE OF GOD. Consequently, where others describe CREATION from Nothingness/ Exnihilo; the Ancient Hebrews believed: there is a BALANCE to all things. There was a WASTE & VOID, then there was ORDER-in-balance-with-CHAOS. There was DARKNESS, then there was LIGHT in the DARK. EVERYTHING was WATER, then there was a FIRMAMENT between the WATERS in the Heavens and the WATERS on the Earth; Waters in Oceans, Seas, Lakes, Rivers and Ponds, as well as there were DRY LANDS. The BIBLICAL Understanding is that nothing exists unto itself in isolation, everything is interrelationship. THUS the problem of JONAH, is how do we understand a people who have been at WAR with us, a People attempting to attack and destroy Israel, spreading lies & hate, seeking genocide. IS our Enemy like us? Are they human? Can they be forgiven? Does the ETERNAL GOD of the Universe care about our Enemy? Must we forgive those who tried to kill?

Reading the Bible, particularly in Worship, we have tendency to adopt Monotone Gregorian Chant. This is sacred text, the Word of GOD, so we hear a voice from our Soul: IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS & THE EARTH... Jonah is different! As Prophecy, the WORD of GOD challenges behaviors, the Book of Jonah challenges the concept: "My enemy is beyond forgiveness!" To make us recognize our own HYPOCRISIES, to challenge accepted norms of behavior, JONAH is written as SATIRE, where everything is grandiose extreme. "THE WORD OF THE LORD GOD CAME TO JONAH, son of Amittai, "GO UP TO GREAT NINEVAH, CAPITOL of THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, PREACHING REPENTANCE."

Instead of GOING UP Northeast to NINEVA Capitol of ASSYRIA, Jonah goes Southwest to the Shore, down to the Docks, down to a Ship, down in that Ship to the berths, where Jonah pulls up the covers to Sleep.

Jonah is a story about ISOLATION & DEPRESSION, LONLINESS, turning away from others, away for GOD, which is one definition of SIN. Attempting to hide from GOD, to runaway from GOD's command, Genesis CHAOS of Creation and Noah's Flood is unleashed, to the extreme that the Sailors (here instead of SAILORS insert CUTTHROAT PIRATES) turn to GOD, questioning who sinned. The means of discerning the WILL OF GOD used by Pirates was not prayer, was not atonement, was not even consulting a Psychic, they threw CRAPS, Dice! Realizing it was the Man of GOD Jonah, the Pirates bring Jonah up from Sleep, up from his Bed, up on Deck before God. Still these evil men have such faith in God, they do not want to throw Jonah overboard, until he tells them. Being tossed over, Jonah is immediately swallowed UP by a Fish.

Inside Digestive Juices/Decay of a Fish, Jonah who thought himself PURE becomes aware how UNCLEAN he was. Like Lazarus from Death to Life, like our Apostles' Creed, it takes the Fish 3 Days of going down to the bottom of the Earth, to get through to Jonah that he needs to Pray. And Jonah prays a very formulaic, ritualistic, meaningless prayer. STILL, as soon as Jonah has acknowledged GOD in prayer, immediately the fish spits Jonah out onto the Shore, and of all places, Jonah is exactly where GOD intended him to be.

Ninevah is an enormous metropolis, Capitol of the Assyrian Empire, it would take 3 days just to walk across, so 30-50 miles across, yet Jonah is able to cross the city in a single day, all the while muttering under his breath "GOD WILL DESTROY ASSYRIA!" There is no Forgiveness, No Hope, only Condemnation. STILL, the whole of the city of Ninevah. From the KING of ASSYRIA down to the Cattle Sheep and Goats, all adorn themselves in the Sackcloth and Ashes of guilt and repentance. And one of the most striking statements in all of Scripture: WHEN GOD WITNESSED WHAT THEY DID, HOW THEY TURNED FROM THEIR EVIL WAYS, GOD HAD COMPASSION & GOD REPENTED.

Those in the Faith Formation Workshop yesterday discussed the shortest verse in the Bible: JESUS WEPT. Here in the words of JONAH in the Old Testament, we have a similar phrase, a difficult image to accept: GOD REPENTED!