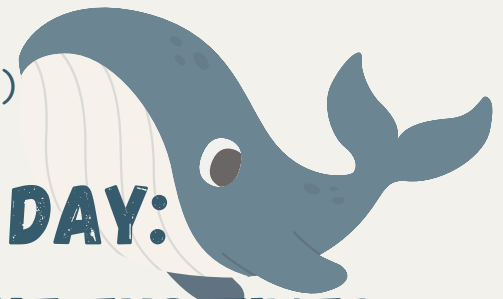


Lent 2024 - Week 2 (28 February 2024)



THE COMING OF THE LORD'S DAY: THE GRACIOUS APOCALYPSE AS THE END TIMES

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET JONAH – WHEN GRACE ABOUNDS

The word of the Lord came

Conversations are a sign of a relationship and usually begin with one person acknowledging another's presence in their life. However, conversations may not always cover expected or welcome subjects.

There are times when conversations, like the one between God and Jonah, can be awkward and unexpected. Even though it was expected for God to speak to a prophet, the conversation was still awkward for Jonah. Awkward conversations, though, cannot be ignored and require a response. The first response should be to "arise," followed by "go," and then "call out." These responses can also be challenging in their own way, but the word of the Lord to Jonah was clear: "Get to your feet, use your energy, and demand..." Jonah reminds us of how the word of God can come to us when we are complacent and minding our own business. God has a way of interrupting our routines, and those who are called are called from their usual lives. It can be uncomfortable and challenging, but God acknowledges us and shares a word with us nonetheless.



The word of
GOD

Jonah's Response

Jonah got up and moved with conviction as he headed down to Joppa. The author's inclusion of the adverb 'down' may indicate a change from the expected course of action. Although Jonah responded to a call, he was heading in the opposite direction to Nineveh. Sometimes, we may respond, but our actions may not align with what is expected, and this could cause issues.



There is a correlation between one's response and their intention. By heading to Joppa, Jonah's intention was not to go to Nineveh, but to get away from it. His aim was to ensure that the desired outcome was different from the expected outcome. By finding a ship going to Tarshish, Jonah could achieve his desired outcome, even if he wasn't in control of where the ship landed. This would have given him a sense of comfort, knowing that he would end up where the ship was going. If Jonah had taken his camel, it would have gone wherever he wanted it to go.



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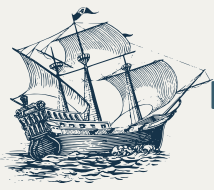
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Nothing happened by chance

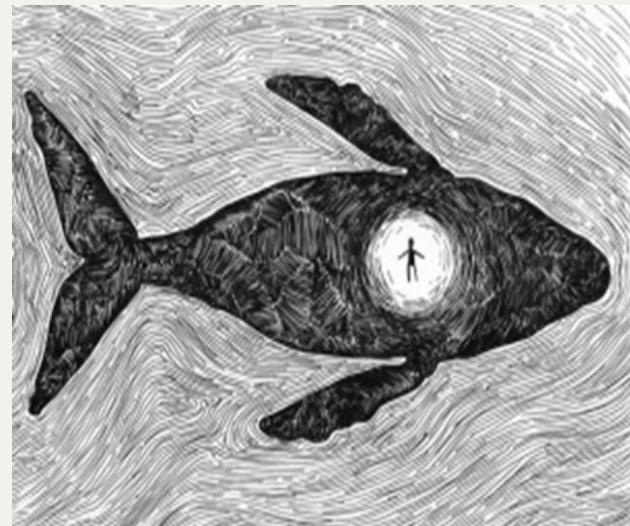


Jonah's actions were intentional and deliberate. He left his home in search of a ship in Joppa to carry out his plan. He paid the fare and boarded the ship legally, using his own resources. Jonah was determined to see his intentions through to the end, and he did not sneak onto the ship. God's plan was equally determined. He sent a great wind upon the sea, which threatened to break the ship apart. Jonah, who had gone down to the lower deck to sleep, was hiding from God, but Psalm 139 reminds us that we cannot hide from God.

When Jonah made a confession among unbelievers that he was a Hebrew and feared the Lord, God used that moment to end Jonah's time of control and enable him to rely on God again. Confessions are gracious moments when God doesn't want to leave us to our own devices.

As the sea grew more tempestuous, God came to claim Jonah back. The sailors tried to protect Jonah, but God would have nothing of their compassion that enabled Jonah's disobedience. Eventually, the sailors threw Jonah into the sea, and he was swallowed up by a great fish for three days and three nights.

Being in the belly of the fish was a moment of grace that stopped Jonah in his tracks. It redirected him towards his true destination and reminded him that his plan was not as important as God's plan. The gracious apocalypse that Jonah experienced allowed him to surrender to God's will and fulfill his true purpose.



Participatory work

PRAYER:

Help me Lord
by guiding my
intentions as
part of your
grace towards
me.
Amen

This week, please read through Chapter 1 carefully. Think about what surprises you about the story of Jonah in relation to what you have always been told about it. Also, identify which parts of Chapter 1 speak truth to your own life so that you can see God's grace at work in you. Consider journaling and reflecting on God's uncomfortable word for you. Have you ever gone down to Joppa, looking for things that will ensure your intentions are fulfilled instead of God's? If so, how do you see God interrupting this perfect plan? Have you ever been brought to a place of confession? If there is something you want to confess to God, bring it to prayer and ask Him to hold you as you leave your ship to Tarshish.

