

**Worship Resources - All Inclusive - <https://youtu.be/UHyTuJuPbMs>**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Year B,**

**24<sup>th</sup> January, 2021**

**Jonah 3:1-5,10 CEV / Mark 1:14-20 CEV**

**Prelude**

***Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing***

music by Edmond S. Lorenz,

played by church musician Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/8xnAFeyKH-I>

**Intro / Call to Worship**

Praise the God of all Creation.

**Worship the One who calls us — speaking with a different voice, offering an unexpected invitation.**

Celebrate the presence of our loving God.

**Rejoice, the realm of God is near.**

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today, let's reflect on God's place in our own lives and the lives of others as we listen to this beautiful song by Jill Phillips.**

**Reflection Video *I Am***

by Jill Phillips - Video with Lyrics, written and performed

by Jill Phillips, and shared to YouTube by KyBelle01

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27YX8bBB\\_Qs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27YX8bBB_Qs)

**Invocation**

Holy One, God of all Creation, you call us to be your people, to carry your vision in this time and place, to go where you send us to help welcome your amazing good news. As we gather in the presence of the risen Christ to spread the news that your realm is near, fill us with your Holy Spirit, O God of all Creation. Fill us with your glorious Spirit, that we may share your good news with a world in need. **Amen.**

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.**

**In our reading from Jonah today, we hear the story of Jonah. As we hear this portion of his story, let's reflect on how God can work in the lives of others in ways we cannot fathom ourselves.**

## **First Testament Reading**

## **Jonah 3:1-5,10 CEV**

Once again the Lord told Jonah

to go to that great city of Nineveh and preach his message of doom.

Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh. The city was so big that it took three days just to walk through it.

After walking for a day, Jonah warned the people, "Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!"

They believed God's message and set a time when they would go without eating to show their sorrow. Then everyone in the city, no matter who they were, dressed in sackcloth.

When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy them as he had planned.

## **Scripture Video**

## **Jonah 3:1-5,10**

### ***Repentance At Nineveh***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOCPAU1ybKU>

## **A Time of Prayer**

**Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.**

## Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's remember Angela and Aayrial as they prepare to relocate and start anew in California. May God bless their new endeavors and give them the strength and support they need.

Let's also remember those who have struggled with the recent political changes in our country. May God work in all our hearts to listen to each other, and recognize the fears that drive the hate and negative feelings so prevalent in our culture today.

We also remember this morning all of us that anxiously await vaccination as well as those who have started their treatment. May God comfort those who wait, and ensure a smooth path for those who have begun to receive their shots, and provide strength and healing for those who are sick with the virus.

Continue to keep Myrna in your prayers as she recently found out she is unable to receive any pain medication for her upcoming surgery, due to her past experiences with allergic reactions.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

## Pastoral Prayer

Heavenly Father, we are not altogether convinced that darkness is a thing of the past. Many people in this world of ours feel their world is one of darkness and gloom. Pressures crowd in upon us and get us down.

The causes are varied: bereavement, illness, money, worries about family, trouble at work or not having work, drugs, drink, boredom, doubt, weariness, futility.

Then there are the world issues: war, poverty, climate change, disease, unfair trade and so on. It does not help when we feel that as Christians we should be doing so much better than we are. Gracious and loving God, we rejoice that you are with us in our troubles, you know us and you love us – always.

Even though we have made a mess of things personally and collectively you remain faithful. We rejoice that your Son came not to a perfect world, but to a broken world, our world. To bring light to the darkness, our darkness.

We pray for our dark and dreary world, a world in need – in need not just of a technical fix, but in need of love and grace, forgiveness and new life, hope, peace and fellowship, in need of renewal, in need of YOU.

We pray that you would come alongside us and all those for whom we pray, that you would show us Jesus, the light of the world, the one who came (and who comes) to rid us of sin, to give us life and health and peace, peace that passes all understanding – not a temporary respite from trouble but the strength to overcome it and ultimately to receive life eternal.

You don't wave a magic wand for everything to be sorted instantly – you require us to exercise our faith and to respond to your call to preach the gospel and to seek to live it out, to look to you for the strength that we need to share your love and grace. Help us to share the good news in word and action – the same good news that the fishermen were called to proclaim that there is a Saviour, a merciful king who loves us and whom we can love and adore.

We have been set free. Enable us to use our freedom to share in bringing in the kingdom. In the light of this we have something to celebrate, something to shout about – for even in our trouble and pain, even in our loss, we know that Jesus is with us.

Hear us as in a moment of silence we pray for those in darkness (of whatever kind) – let us pray that they may see and know the light of Christ:

### ***Silence***

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Hear our prayers, Lord, spoken and unspoken and answer them for Jesus' sake. **Amen**

**In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear Mark's version of the story of Jesus calling his first disciples. As we reflect on this familiar scene of fisherman casting their nets aside, let's reflect on what we've been called to cast aside to follow Christ, and how successful we've been in letting go of our own nets.**

## **Gospel Lesson      Mark 1:14-20 CEV**

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God.<sup>[a]</sup>

He said, "The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here.<sup>[b]</sup> Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen and were casting their nets into the lake.

Jesus said to them, "Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish."

Right then the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.

Jesus walked on and soon saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat, mending their nets.

At once Jesus asked them to come with him. They left their father in the boat with the hired workers and went with him.

## **Scripture Video     Mark 1:14-20**

### ***The Calling Of The Disciples At The Sea***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X03I8CkMZXU>

## **Message – *All Inclusive***

The story is told of a Sunday School teacher who was proud of her lesson for the day. She thought that she had presented the material quite nicely. Summing up, she asked her class, "And what do we learn from the story of Jonah and the great fish?" An eight-year-old girl, named Suzy, thought for a moment and answered, "Always travel by air." Humorous, but that little story also illustrates sadly what we often focus on with the story of Jonah.

When we hear the name Jonah, we automatically think of the part of the story involving three days inside a fish, and often forget the rest of the story. Jonah is unique among the books of the prophets of the Old Testament. The other books focus on the lives, deeds, and sayings of people like Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah. They read like a biography and historical account. Jonah is different in the fact that it is written more like a parable.

Like all the other prophets, Jonah's story opens with the call from God to Jonah to prophesy. But unlike the other prophets of the Old Testament, he didn't pack a bag and head out the door to do God's will. He probably packed a bag, but then he went straight to one of the biggest ports around and booked a ticket for the furthest destination you could go to from Palestine and Ninevah, a place called Tarshish.

Now there's been some debate whether Tarshish was in northern Africa in what is now known as Libya, or if it was even further away on the Iberian peninsula where

Spain and Portugal now exist. Regardless, it was somewhere on the other side of the known world at that time. But then again, the mission God gave him was different than that asked of the other prophets as well. Instead of being sent to his own rulers in Israel or Judah, God was sending him to the very heart of his people's most hated and sworn enemies, the Assyrians. That nation had been a constant threat to Israel and Judah for generations, constantly harassing and at times demanding tribute from both kingdoms, until ultimately destroying the Northern Kingdom, taking them into captivity and ending their history as a culture, with just a remnant remaining as the Samaritans.

It's tempting to see Jonah's story as one of someone who maybe lost his nerve, or is willingly disobedient to God. And he certainly is being disobedient, but as always in biblical accounts, context is very important. While Jonah is set in the period before the Assyrians wiped out the Northern Kingdom and before the Southern Kingdom was exiled to Babylon, we know from the language used that it was actually written down after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon. It was during this period a new outlook developed among the peoples of Judea. Under Ezra, they made a very public showing of discarding anything foreign, including their wives. They developed a very "Israel First" outlook, you might even say their motto was "Make Judea Great Again." This very ethnocentric view even percolated down to their view of God and God's salvation.

Throughout the Old Testament covenants, you had God's chosen people, but there was always the understanding that at the end of things, ALL peoples would be gathered under God on his holy mountain. However, after the exile, that view of the end times was largely pushed aside in favor of Jewish exclusivity. It was during this time that it became unclean to eat with or share the company of Gentiles. Non-Jews were increasingly ostracized, even and especially their cousins the Samaritans. So Jonah, in his resistance to God's call, was reflecting the prevailing wisdom and attitudes of the audience to which this story was written, which makes this parable all the more poignant and relevant.

Jonah resisted God because he knew God was trying to provide a path for redemption to the hated Assyrians, that people who in his mind exemplified everything wrong with the Gentile world. It took a violent storm at sea and being partially digested in the belly of a fish for him to cave and agree to perform the task laid before him by the Almighty. And even then, he was irritated and despondent when the entire Assyrian nation, from the king down to the livestock, obeyed God's warning, and were spared by God.

Quite a story to be sure, and not too far off the mark from what's going on in our culture today is it?. How different are we than the ancient Judeans in seeking to purge ourselves of people who are foreign, who look and act different than we do, all to make ourselves "great again?"

Do we, like Jonah, blame entire peoples en masse for the actions of a few? Jonah started his story fleeing from God to avoid being the means by which a large group of Gentiles would be saved. Yet along the way, he met other Gentiles on the boat who showed genuine concern for him, and he was willing to give up his own life on their behalf. Throughout our own Christian history, have we not followed a similar pattern? Jews, Muslims, Gypsies, among others, were the impure ones, the others we needed to purge and avoid.

Likewise, in American history, we've had our scapegoats as well, Germans, Irish, African Americans, Jews, Muslims, Mexicans, and many others as well. Yet over time, many of these groups gained greater acceptance, not necessarily because we have become more enlightened, but because like Jonah, we have gotten to know them as individuals, and they ceased to be stereotypes and became real human beings.

From God's perspective, is there any human individual who is not worthy of redemption and salvation? That is the point that the book of Jonah is ultimately making. No matter how much we malign, stereotype, and try to exclude any group of people, God's perspective is on each human being in that group. Each one of those people are created in God's own image. God's grace is extended to all those we would turn away from, those who create discomfort and fear in us.

But what are we doing for the Ninevites of our own time? For centuries, Christians have preached a lot about the dignity and sanctity of all people, yet racism still flourishes among and all around us. Do we profess maximum Christian ideals, yet are content with a minimum of social action to achieve them? Is it any wonder many question the validity of those Christian ideals in light of the little that's really been done to make them a reality.

Last week, I had the opportunity to hear a partial reading of Martin Luther King Jr's Letter from Birmingham Jail. The letter was a response by Dr. King to the many faith leaders who were critical of his actions, of him "making waves" and causing unrest, instead of working within "the system" or "waiting for the right time."

As Christians, isn't it our duty to "make waves" when confronted with injustice, with people being mistreated or stereotyped simply for who they are, and not for the

content of their individual character? How do we work within a system that tries to exclude others because of who they are or where they are from, without any consideration of their qualities as individuals? Instead of focusing on the literal handful of people who make bad or harmful choices, we need to focus on the thousands or millions of the rest of that group that lead lives very similar to our own, with similar hopes and dreams. Rather than objectifying the mosque down the road from here based on our stereotypes.

What would happen if we made the effort to get to know those individuals who worship there? Might we come away with a different opinion? We might even find we can work together to solve or alleviate other problems in our community. Instead of obsessing over acts of resistance that catch our attention, such as taking a knee at a football game, or random acts of violence and looting by a limited few at a Black Lives Matter protest let's instead ask ourselves what it is that makes their experience so different than our own. What has been their experience of living among us, what has been their struggle, and how have we enabled or participated in that struggle?

The bottom line is we are called by our God to drop our nets, our hang-ups, and step out in faith to follow him. Part of that journey is to see each individual human being as lovingly created in God's image, no different than ourselves, and to seek to see the individual in all things, never the stereotype. God's grace excludes no one, neither should we. Amen.

## **Call to Serve.**

**Gestures of gratitude are a demonstration that a blessing or benefit has been received. We heard a call, dropped our nets and came to this place to find new life. The gifts we give today are but tokens of the blessings of the new life we live in Christ. Bring your gifts with joy for they remind us of just how blessed we are to know this love that flows so generously from the spirit of God. As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. This morning, as Annie shares the following familiar song Amazing Grace, let's give some thought to how we have benefitted from God's grace, and how we extend that grace to others in our own lives.**

## A Time for Reflection

### Reflection on the Word [video] *Amazing Grace*

written by John Newton,

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/cgnLfxaHpk0>

### The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Great God of Heaven and Earth, you call us to leave behind our preoccupations and to follow you into the future. Sometimes we find your call challenging. We are comfortable, maybe even complacent, in our present. May this act of giving be a gesture of our willingness to follow where you lead. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### Blessing/Assurance

The word of God came to Jonah

**The word of God comes to us:**

Go

**Despite your fears**

Speak

**the truth of God**

Love

**your neighbor and your enemy**

Forgive

**as you have been forgiven**

Receive

**grace upon grace**

**overflowing from the fullness of God.**

**As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.**

**Postlude**      *Holy Ground*, by Geron Davis,

arr. by Phillip Keveren, performed by church musician Annie Center,  
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<https://youtu.be/7he5Q8PDU7I>