

**GOD'S WORD TO US TODAY IS A WHOLE OF A TALE. IT IS THE CALL FROM GOD TO EACH ONE OF US TO FOLLOW HIM. THIS CALL FROM GOD HAS AN INTERESTING HISTORY IN SCRIPTURE, AND USUALLY FOLLOWS A PATTERN. GOD CALLS, THE PERSON FINDS AN EXCUSE TO SAY NO. SOMETHING HAPPENS TO HELP THEM CHANGE THEIR MIND, AND WHEN GOD CALLS AGAIN, THEY SAY YES.**

**THE GREAT STORY OF JONAH IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE.**

**GOD CALLS JONAH TO GO TO THE PAGAN CITY, NINEVEH, AND CALL THE PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS AND FOLLOW THE CALL OF GOD.**

**JONAH IS AN ISRAELITE AND THEREFORE HE THINKS THAT GOD ONLY CALLS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE. SO IF JONAH GOES TO THESE PAGANS, WHO HE BELIEVES HAVE NO PART IN GOD'S PLANS, AND PREACHES TO THEM ABOUT THE GOD OF ISRAEL HE WILL BE RIDICULED BY ALL HIS FELLOW JEWS. SO JONAH SAYS NO. NOT ONLY THAT HE THINKS HE CAN RUN AWAY FROM GOD AND HIDE.**

**HE SAILS AWAY TO SPAIN. A MIGHTY STORM BLOWS IN AND THREATENS TO SINK THE BOAT. SO THE CREW START TO JETTISON THE CARGO.**

**JONAH THINKS: OH,OH. THIS IS GOD GETTING BACK AT ME. SO HE TELLS THE CREW TO THROW HIM OVERBOARD AND THEY WILL BE O.K. IT IS NOT IN THE BROCHURE OF CRUISE SHIPS THAT PASSENGERS WILL BE**

**TOSSED OVERBOARD, SO THEY REFUSE. BUT WHEN JONAH INSISTS, THEY DO IT. OVER HE GOES. AND THE STORM SUBSIDES. BUT ALONG COMES A WHALE AND SWALLOWS JONAH. AFTER THREE DAYS OF INDIGESTION THE WHALE KNOWS IT CAN'T PUT UP WITH THIS HUMAN IN ITS BELLY, SO IT HEADS FOR SHORE AND SPEWS JONAH ONTO THE BEACH. WHILE JONAH IS CLEANING HIMSELF UP, TRYING TO GET RID OF THE BLUBBER SMELL, GOD COMES AND ASKS HIM WILL HE NOW GO TO NINEVEH? JONAH ISN'T GAME TO SEE WHAT ELSE GOD MIGHT DO, SO HE SAYS YES. HE PREACHES IN THE CITY, THEY LISTEN AND ARE CONVERTED.**

**THE GOSPEL GIVES US ANOTHER FISHY STORY. JESUS IS WALKING ON THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. HE SEES A GROUP OF FISHERMEN, HE CALLS THEM TO FOLLOW HIM. THEY WILL WORK WITH JESUS TO CATCH PEOPLE.**

**WHY DOES JESUS WANT PEOPLE TO BE CAUGHT? THE GOSPEL GIVES US THE TWO REASONS: SO THAT THEY WILL REPENT, AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS.**

**TO REPENT HAS A PRETTY GLOOMY SENSE ABOUT IT. WE ARE EVIL, EVERYTHING WE DO IS EVIL AND WE ARE DAMNED UNLESS WE UNDERGO A COMPLETE AND UTTER TURN-AROUND. THAT IS OUR**

**COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING. REPENTANCE IS VERY SIMPLY A CHANGE OF MIND. AND WE CHANGE OUR MINDS ABOUT A WHOLE LOT OF THINGS. THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE SPECIAL HALLMARK OF WOMEN. WE ARE ALL CALLED EVERY DAY TO CHANGE OUR MINDS ABOUT GOD. TO CHANGE FROM FEAR TO CONFIDENCE. TO CHANGE FROM INDIFFERENCE TO COMMITMENT. TO CHANGE FROM I'LL DO IT LATER TO I WILL DO IT TODAY.**

**TO BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS SIMPLY MEANS THAT I TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD. TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS REALLY LIKE WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT HIM. TO BELIEVE THAT GOD LOVES THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IN IT, ESPECIALLY ME. TO BELIEVE THAT WHAT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE REALLY IS TRUE. TO BELIEVE IS TO EXPERIENCE THE WOW FACTOR ABOUT GOD IN MY LIFE, HIS COMPLETE LOVE, ABSOLUTE ACCEPTANCE, HIS ABILITY TO FORGIVE AND FORGET.**

**WE ACT AS THOUGH WE BELIEVE THIS. THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE. THAT IS WHY WE COME FORWARD TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION. THAT IS WHY WE PRAY. THE DANGER IS THAT THESE VERY WAYS THAT WE EXPRESS OUR BELIEF CAN VERY EASILY SLIP INTO HABIT AND UNTHINKING WAYS OF DOING THINGS, WITHOUT REMEMBERING WHY**

**WE ARE HERE AND WHAT REALLY HAPPENS WHEN JESUS COMES TO ME  
IN HOLY COMMUNION. TO BELIEVE IS TO TAKE WHAT HAPPENS HERE  
AND CARRY IT OUTSIDE AND LIVE IT. TO LIVE GOD'S LOVE, TO LIVE  
GOD'S ACCEPTANCE, TO LIVE JESUS IN ME.**

**TO REPENT AND TO BELIEVE ARE THE MOST JOYFUL, LIFE-GIVING,  
EXUBERANT THINGS WE CAN DO. WE TOO CAN HAVE A WHALE OF A  
TIME.**