

Sermon Notes: January 24, 2021 **Focus:** Jonah the anti-prophet [All Readings](#)

To the best of my memory, I've only preached one other time about Jonah at St. Timothy's – January 2018. As I re-read the old sermon, the message still holds water. I said then “The Book of Jonah is a mirror to look at...in that mirror, do you see yourself nursing a favorite grudge because *those* people are too stupid, too arrogant, too liberal, too conservative, too entitled or too whatever to deserve God's mercy lived through us?”

Now that I have been with you all three and half years, I want to diagnose us (and myself) with a mild case of Jonah-itis. Jonah could not stand Nineveh and knew that God wanted to use him to bless his enemy. Because of that he ran in the opposite direction. When forced, he reluctantly preached. As a result of Jonah's short, venomous sermon, kings and cows changed their ways.

In 2020, inside and outside the church, I have heard a baker's dozen of times some version of, “I simply won't talk to *those* people anymore.” *Those* people holding other political or social convictions. Maybe it is because we live online all the time that we have case of Jonah-itis, but I think this condition is bigger than the pandemic, YouTube, and Zoom isolation.

Our disengagement from people we don't like changes nothing. You don't have to be effusive about it, but try connecting with people you consider difficult. Jonah practically spits out his short, hateful sermon, but the result was repenting, Kings and cows alike.

Let's be just slightly better than Jonah. Let's cherish, nurture, and celebrate a community that includes people we disagree with. For example, do you dislike Trump? Congrats, you're not alone. Fun fact, the voting day numbers at St. Timothy's on election day: 2/3rds for DJT. *Do you now get to righteously disregard 2/3^{rds} of our literal neighbors?* But what can you/we do to be living grace in such an ungraceful time?

If you are a Trump fan or fan of Trump policies, do you feel like St. Timothy's does not have a place for you? I am sorry and you are welcome here. Your views don't have broad community support, but I, your priest, am working on my Jonah-itis and I want to know your particular experience of grace, love, and mercy. I will talk directly with you, share with you, fuss with you, and be transformed by you. I look forward to seeing grace through your eyes, especially when we don't see eye-to-eye.

Core Values In the Episcopal Church we have long held - often inarticulate values. It is nearly impossible to get an Episcopalian to describe what being an Episcopalian means. We will mumble something about the Via Media (middle way); the big tent; or “the Episcopal Church welcomes you.” Maybe that is just my “good ol' days”, but I still believe in the big tent.

If we can't work with anyone who might disagree with us, then that's the poison pill that the book of Jonah lampoons. Jonah at core is a satire making Jonah, the chosen one, look like a petulant fool. Jonah was a satire in that the most righteous people were foul mouthed sailors, receptive kings, and fasting cows.

Todd

Bible Project You know that the Bible Project is one of my go-to resources. This link here is to the Jonah overview video <https://youtu.be/dLIabZcoO4c>

UNIQUE AMONG the PROPHETS:
WORDS OF A PROPHET vs. **STORY ABOUT A PROPHET**

JONAH'S ONE OTHER APPEARANCE in the OLD TESTAMENT:
 GOD'S FAVOR IS WITH YOU! vs. NO! GOD'S JUSTICE IS AGAINST YOU!
JONAH (REALLY BAD KING) 2KINGS 14:23-25
AMOS 6:13-14

PROPHET WHO REBELS
POWERFUL KING WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF
PIRAN SAILORS WHO REPENT
EVEN COWS REPENT!

JONAH
 THE SUBVERSIVE STORY OF A REBELLIOUS PROPHET WHO HATES GOD FOR LOVING HIS ENEMIES
 DISTINCT NARRATIVE STYLE: *Satire*
 EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES vs. HUMOR AND IRONY

THIS BOOK IS TRYING TO MESS WITH YOU:
 ARE YOU OKAY WITH GOD LOVING YOUR ENEMIES?
 AREN'T YOU GLAD GOD LOVES HIS ENEMIES?

HERE'S WHY HE RAN:
 I KNEW YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE AND LOVE TO FORGIVE! (EXODUS 34:6)
 JUST KILL ME NOW...
 JONAH, IS YOUR ANGER JUSTIFIED? (4:4,9)
 YES, JUST LET ME DIE...
 AREN'T HUMANS MORE VALUABLE THAN VINE'S?
 SHOULDN'T I BE CONCERNED ABOUT NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY?
THE END.

1 JONAH AND THE SAILORS
 GO TO NINEVEH AND PREACH AGAINST ITS EVIL. (1:2)
 TARSHISH vs. NINEVEH
WHY DOES HE RUN...??
 I WORSHIP THE HORRID WHO MADE THE SEA AND THE LAND...
 O GAWD! DON'T LET US BLEED ON OUR HANDS!
 THIS SHOULD WORK.

2 JONAH'S 1ST PRAYER OF REPENTANCE (...SORT OF)
 NEVER TECHNICALLY REPENTED, BUT... THANKS GOD FOR NOT ABANDONING HIM AND... PROMISES TO OBEY FROM THIS POINT ON.
 BLECH!
 GOD ONLY RESPONDS

3 JONAH AND THE NINEVITES
 GO TO NINEVEH AND PREACH WHAT I TELL YOU. (3:2)
A SHORT, ODD SECTION
 no mention of:
 ★ NINEVEH'S SIN
 ★ HOW TO RESPOND
 ★ GOD!
 FORTY MORE DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTURNED!
 IS THIS PROPHETIC SABOTAGE???
 NEVERTHELESS... FORGIVE US, OH GOD!!
JONAH'S MEANING: "OVERTHROWN" "DESTROYED" (SEE GENESIS 19:21)
WHAT HAPPENED: "TRANSFORMED" "CHANGED" (SEE 1 SAMUEL 10:6)
OVER TURNED

4 JONAH'S 2ND PRAYER A CRITICISM OF GOD'S MERCY

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