

Looking for the Light

a devotional from
ST. CHARLES AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

by Kathy Randall

Read:

Jonah 1:1-17

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. 6 The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

7 The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 “I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

11 Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.” 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. 14 **Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish** on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” 15 So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

17 But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Reflect:

Strange how one can pick words from the Bible to fit any situation.

This is the case with the story of Jonah from today's Lectionary. I was instantly transported to a happy memory from JOPPA (now known as JAFFA, Israel) on a 2013 tour of the Holy Land. SCAPC and Temple Sinai traveled together in what became a bond of deep friendship for participants.

How blessed we are to have each other in this time of COVID-19 when "we pray do not let us perish."

Jonah's "whale of a tale" followed us through Galilee, the Dead Sea and on to Jerusalem. The Beatitudes became so real. Looking back, it is important to realize that April 21 is celebrated on the Presbyterian Calendar as "Holocaust Remembrance Day". On our journey we visited VAD VASHEM. I personally saw the facial pain as Jewish travelers traced their lineage at Israel's National Museum to the Remembrance of the Holocaust. Exiting the museum our group paused together for prayer with words so similar to this scripture - "Please, O Lord, we pray do not let us perish."

May we always value how God speaks to us. May we always value friendship. And, may we always value life.

Ask:

- What message can Jonah and the whale teach us about ways we try to hide from God?
- How can a pandemic show us paths to center our minds around prayer?
- Can sharing a time of remembrance with friends deepen the understanding of life?

Pray:

Gracious and loving God, focus our hearts on avenues to strengthen our conversations with You. May the challenges of disease make life even more precious in every way. We thank you God for giving us people in our daily lives to show your love and teach us how to be friends in return. And may we always seek scripture to show us how. Amen



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If you would like to contribute to our daily devotionals, please email Pastor Sarah, sarah@scapc.org.

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