A.M.D.G. Epiphany 3-B Text: Jonah

 January 21st, 2018

**Jonah 3: 1-5, 10** The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, ‘Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.’So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across.Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, ‘Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth….  When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and He did not do it.

**约拿3:1-5,10约拿遵命**3 耶和华的话再次临到约拿，说： 2“起来！到尼尼微大城去，向其中的居民宣告我所吩咐你的话。” 3约拿就动身，照耶和华的话往尼尼微去了，这尼尼微是一座极大的城（“是一座极大的城”或译：“在　神面前是一座大城”），要三天才能走完。**尼尼微人悔改得救**4约拿进城，走了一天，就宣告说：“再过四十天，尼尼微就要毁灭了。” 5尼尼微人信了（“信了”或译：“信服”）　神，就宣告禁食，从大到小，都穿上麻衣。10　神看见他们所作的，就是悔改离开恶行，　神就转意，不把所说的灾祸降在他们身上了。

**鲸鱼的传说 A Whale Of A Tale**

Our Hebrew Scripture this morning is from a little book by the name of Jonah – tucked away in a section of the Bible known as the Minor Prophets. And many of us know this story, don’t we – some of us from the time we were small children in Sunday School. It was really interesting this week, on Thursday evening, that quite coincidentally, the story we were discussing in FIG – the Fellowship Intercultural Gathering group – was

this very story of Jonah.

今天早上我们的希伯来文的经文是来自一个很短的书卷”约拿书”– 该书放在了圣经中的小先知书卷的部分。 我们中的许多人都知道这个故事，对吧 - 我们中的一些人从小孩子的时候，在主日学校就知道。 很有意思，很巧合的是，周四晚上我们FIG（跨文化聚会团契）里讨论的故事--就是约拿的故事。

The story is set around the 9th Century BCE when the Assyrian Empire was at its height – although most biblical scholars agree that it was probably *written* several centuries later, after the Israelites returned to their homeland from the Babylonian Exile – after 537 BCE. It tells how Jonah was commissioned by Yahweh, the God of Israel, to go to the great city of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. Today, the ancient site of Nineveh lies just to the east of the modern city of Mosul in Iraq – recently in the news as a stronghold of ISIS.

这个故事发生在公元前9世纪，当时亚述帝国处于最高峰 - 虽然大多数圣经学者都认为，这可能发生在几个世纪以后，在以色列人从巴比伦流亡回到祖国之后 - 在公元前537年之后。 它讲述了约拿是如何受耶和华，以色列的上帝的委托，去亚述的首都尼尼微大城。 今天，尼尼微古遗址位于伊拉克摩苏尔现代城东边 - 最近有消息称是伊斯兰国的大本营。

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Jonah was called by God to preach that the city would be destroyed if they did not repent of their sinful ways. And no task could have been more distasteful to him – for the Assyrians, who were known widely for their barbaric warfare – had oppressed Israel

cruelly, and were bitterly detested.

约拿被神召唤到尼尼微城传道说，若他们不悔改自己的罪孽，那城必被毁灭。对他来说，再没有比这更令人厌恶的任务了--因为亚述人以野蛮的战争而广为人知，他们残酷地压迫着以色列，并且痛恨他们。

This story reminds us that if going to church is dangerous – as we found out last week in our exploration of Samuel’s call – today, we discover that God sometimes calls us to go

to places we would rather not venture.

这个故事提醒我们，如果去教堂是危险的--就像我们上周在探索撒母耳的召唤时发现的那样--我们发现，上帝有时会召唤我们去那些我们宁愿不冒险的地方。

Jonah’s story is a folktale, a parable, a satirical comedy that swallows us up and spits us out again – challenging us to look at ourselves – even as we laugh at the drama which

unfolds before us.

约拿的故事是一个民间故事，一个寓言，一部讽刺喜剧 -- 把我们吞进去，又把我们吐了出来 - -挑战我们审视自己 – 就在我们对眼前的故事发笑的时候。

Everything is exaggerated: God calls – and Jonah responds by buying a one way ticket in the opposite direction to the farthest place he can run – Tarshish. *(map)* A huge storm develops and he ends up being thrown overboard and swallowed by a gigantic fish. He somehow manages to survive 3 days in the belly of the fish – who, completely nauseated at Jonah by then – vomits him up onto the shore. God then repeats the mission before him, and Jonah ends up in Nineveh, where he preaches the shortest sermon on record – just 5 words in Hebrew *“forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!”* He probably thought this was an acceptable minimum to get God off his back. And to the shock of everyone – including, it appears, God – the entire population

of the city, including the king and even the animals – repent of their sinful ways

一切都被夸大了：上帝召唤约拿 – 而约拿的回应却是买了一张去往完全相反的方向单程票，是他能跑到的最远的地方--他施((地图)。一场巨大的风暴正在形成，他最终被抛到船外并被一条巨大的鱼吞到肚子里。他在鱼的肚子里存活了3天 – 最后大鱼对约拿感到恶心 – 就把他吐到岸上。然后上帝在约拿面前重复他的使命，约拿最后来到尼尼微城。在那里他开始了有历以来最短的布道--希伯来文只有5个字，（翻译成英文是）“四十天后尼尼微将会被摧毁！”他可能认为这是一个可以接受的最低限度，上帝就不再纠缠他了。令人震惊的是，所有的人--包括上帝--包括国王，甚至动物--都悔改了自己的罪孽。

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Not only that – but according to the story – even God repents and changes God’s mind about destroying the city. And that makes Jonah furious! Confronted with astounding success, Jonah stomps off to sulk. “I knew it!” he says. “I knew You were a merciful God, slow to anger and abounding in love. I knew it!” And he doesn’t say it as a

compliment!

不仅如此--而且根据故事--甚至上帝也会后悔并改变上帝关于毁灭这座城市的想法。这让约拿很生气！面对令人震惊的成功，约拿跺着脚很生气了。“我就知道！”他说。“我知道你是一个仁慈的上帝，不轻易发怒，充满了慈爱。我就知道！”他说的这些话可不是恭维的话。

Now I hope you catch the humour in all of this. The book of Jonah is a funny book. It is a satire on every exclusive, narrow-minded expression of religion. This is theology as high comedy. But as the story intends, I hope it also disturbs us as well. The story of Jonah holds before us a picture of God who is so patient, so relentlessly merciful that it pushes us to confront our own prejudices, our own biases, our own grudges and

resentments.

我希望你能理解这一切的幽默。约拿书是一本有趣的书。这是对每一种排他性的狭隘宗教表达的讽刺.。这是神学最高的喜剧。但是，正如故事的意图一样，我希望它也能让我们思考。约拿的故事在我们面前展现了一幅上帝的画像，他是如此耐心，如此不懈地怜悯我们，迫使我们面对我们自己的偏见，我们自己的偏见，我们自己的嫉妒和怨恨。

Like Jonah, we *expect* God to be gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love – toward ***us.*** But that is not necessarily how we want God to be toward others. This is not just a ‘fish story’ or a tall tale about ancient feuds. No. The joke, if it is a joke, is on us. Somehow, we start out by laughing at this rather ridiculous whale of a tale – and

end up being challenged to look at our own lives.

和约拿一样，我们期望上帝仁慈和怜悯，对**我们**充满坚定的爱。但这并不一定是我们希望上帝对待他人的方式。这不仅仅是一个“鱼的故事”，也不是一个关于古代恩怨的高谈阔论。不，这个笑话，如果是笑话，就是对我们开的玩笑。不知怎么的，我们一开始嘲笑这只相当可笑的鲸鱼故事，结果却被挑战去审视我们自己的生活。

Here’s the question beneath all this: how far does God’s love reach? When Jesus answered that question in his words and deeds, he got himself into a lot of trouble. He never seemed to be able to distinguish between the people he taught and healed. He preached to the poor. He offered acceptance to the outcast. And just when they were ready to typecast him, Jesus went into the home of a rich tax collector and broke bread with the wealthy Pharisees. He did not distinguish between rich and poor, male or female, insiders or outsiders. He didn’t restrict his care to one group or another. No – in the name of God, Jesus gave himself equally to everyone he encountered.

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下面是这样一个问题：上帝的爱能达到有多远？当耶稣用他的言行来回答这个问题时，他陷入了很多麻烦。他似乎永远无法区分开他所教的人和他所治愈的人。他向穷人布道。他接纳那些被社会抛弃的人。就在他们准备模式化耶稣的时候，耶稣又走进一个富有的税吏家，并与富有的法利赛人一起吃饭。他没有区分富人和穷人，男性或女性，内部人士或局外人。他没有把自己限制在一个或另一个组群。没有。 -- 以上帝的名义，耶稣平等地对待他遇到的每一个人。

This ‘whale of a tale’ this morning from the book of Jonah is as relevant today as it was at the time it was written. We, too, live in a world that seems to be increasingly and alarmingly polarized by narrow-minded politics and selective self-interest. Last week, the comment made by the US President about not wanting to receive immigrants from “\*\**\*hole countries”* was shameful and disturbing – and made even worse by those who

supported him.

今天早上，约拿书中的“鲸鱼故事”所处的年代与当今世界是有关的。我们也生活在一个似乎日益被狭隘的政治和有选择的自我利益所严重分化的世界中。上周，美国总统关于不想接收来自“该死的国家”的移民的言论是可耻和令人不安的--而那些支持他的人更是如此。

And we in Canada are also not exempt – as we have seen in incidents of racial profiling of Indigenous people, and acts of hatred and racism - like the young woman attacked on the bus for wearing a hijab, or the graffiti sprayed on the walls of moques and

synagogues.

我们在加拿大也不能免除 – 就种族歧视土著人事件看，与仇恨和种族歧视，一位年轻妇女因为头戴面纱而在公车上被攻击，或涂鸦喷涂在清真寺和犹太会堂的墙壁上。

As people trying to live in God’s way, the story of Jonah challenges us this morning:

- it challenges our own biases and prejudices (*we all have them!)*

- it challenges our narrow thinking and stereotyping - and widens the circle of belonging to include everyone;

- it challenges us that to take our faith seriously means speaking out against things like racism, homophobia, and sexism – wherever we find them;

- and it challenges our indifference, and our excuses for staying silent.

当人们试图以上帝的方式生活时，约拿的故事今天早上挑战了我们：

-它挑战我们自己的偏见和歧视(我们都有！)

-它挑战我们狭隘的思维和陈规定型观念，这一观念扩大包括的范围，使之包括所有人；

-它向我们提出了挑战，即认真对待我们的信仰意味着公开反对种族主义、仇视同性恋和性别歧视

无论我们在哪里找到它们；

-它挑战我们的冷漠和保持沉默的借口。

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That’s the uncomfortable part of God’s word for us this morning.

这是今天早上上帝话语中（让我们感到）不安的部分。

The ***good*** news is that the story of Jonah also invites us to be open to the surprising ways in which God works in our lives and in the lives of others. It reminds us of our God who loves us so much that God keeps searching for us, even when we run off in the opposite direction. It tells us of a God who creates opportunities for us to learn from our mistakes – and gives us 2nd, and even 3rd and 4th chances when we mess up. And finally, the story of Jonah reminds us that there is no situation and no group of people to whom the love of God does not extend. No one can escape God’s presence – and no one stands outside God’s grace.

好消息是，约拿的故事也邀请我们：敞开心扉面对上帝和他人在我们生活中所做的令人惊讶的方式。这使我们想起了我们的上帝，他爱我们，以致上帝不断寻找我们，即使我们朝相反的方向逃跑。它告诉我们上帝，他创造机会让我们从错误中吸取教训，当我们陷入困境时，给我们第二次，甚至第三次和第四次机会。最后，约拿的故事提醒我们，没有一种处境，也没有一群人不受上帝的爱。没有人能逃避上帝的存在，也没有人站在上帝的恩典之外。

There’s much for us to ponder in the days ahead, isn’t there?

May God give us grace to have our eyes, ears and hearts open. Amen

在未来的日子里，我们有很多需要思考的地方，不是吗？

 愿神赐给我们恩典，使我们的眼睛、耳朵和心都开阔。阿门