

<sup>1</sup> *The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:* <sup>2</sup> *“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”* *Jonah 1:1, 2 NIV*

I can imagine when Jonah heard God’s command; Jonah thought God had lost His mind. The Ninivites were brutal foes, and religiously way outside the faith of Jewish nation. Then he probably got really scared because his task was that of one person against a “great city” full of people.

So Jonah did what any self- respecting scared opposite prophet would do, he got passage on ship for Tarshish, which was WAY OUT in the opposite direction from Nineveh. May be if he went away far enough, God would forget the whole thing.

However God did not. A scary, violent storm comes up and the captain tells everyone to pray their god for help. Finally Jonah “fesses” up that this is his fault. He instructs them to throw him into the sea. They reluctantly do so and sure enough the storm stops. At that point I can imagine Jonah saying to himself; “let me die, anything is better than having to preach to those awful Ninevites!”

But God was not going to give up that easy, for a “great fish” swallows Jonah, saves him from drowning. FINALLY, Jonah is ready to do what God asks of him.

While not as dramatic as the story of Jonah, I too have had times when I felt God was asking me to do something I was reluctant to do. While I don’t thing I have ever “headed in the opposite direction” like Jonah, I can get stubborn, or at least postpone the task until maybe God will “forget”.

God is God, and when we know God is calling us to do something, we had better get about doing it. The good news is when we are obedient to God’s direction (whether we like out not), there will always be something good at the other end. I never cease to be pleasantly surprised and blessed when I follow through on what I think God has called me to do. Jonah’s obedience saved a large city from destruction (poor Jonah, that didn’t make him happy either).

There is an old hymn that has the line “trust and obey for there’s no better way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey” A God who is truly God over us all is not always going to operate on our schedule, preferences, or way of thinking. Perhaps when we come to that place in our walk with God, we can listen and go forward as best as humanly possible trying to remember that we “see through a glass dimly” . God’s way is best may we be faithful.

Pr. John Van Haneghan