

January 24, 2021

1 Sm 3:3b-10,19; 1 Cor 6:13c-15a,17-20; Jn 1:35-42

What is up with Jonah? The part of the story we hear today comes after a lot of other drama has happened. By this point, Jonah had already been called by God to go to Nineveh and he ran away. That's right, God said "Go to Nineveh" and Jonah went quickly in the other direction, took off in a boat, had an interesting meeting with a whale, and wound up right back where he started out. Why did he run away from what God was calling him to do?

We could ask this same question to ourselves: Why do we run away from what God calls us to do? Probably for two big reasons: First, we don't know what God is calling us to do, and Second because when we figure it out we are afraid. Figuring out what God wants us to do when there are so many other voices telling us what to do and so much conflict in ourselves is hard enough. But going forward and doing it adds more worry, because we wonder what will happen. Jonah was clear about what God wanted him to do, but he was afraid of how it was going to turn out, afraid of how his following God would effect his life, afraid that after doing all this, God would not be there to support him. He worried what would happen **TO HIM** if he went to Nineveh, he wasn't worried of what would happen to the Ninevites if he kept quiet. They were going to die if he didn't go and warn them - but he put his own comfort and safety over a huge city of people. Selfishness and fear are some of the biggest things that stop us from doing the good that God calls us to.

But what exactly is God calling us to do? Our fear and desire for comfort may make us to tell ourselves that it's somebody else's job to do the things that Jesus needs done. But really, God calls each and every one of us to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ in this world. If we are serious about being Christians we can't deny this call. So what do we do? First, relax - God does not call us to something that we can't do. Look at Jonah. Despite his worries, when he finally did what God asked, he did a great job. God is calling all of us, young or old, to tasks in the Church and in the world. These may change as time goes on - God called me to do different things when I was a kid then now, at one point I was a counselor and started a non-profit for the homeless, but now God expects certain things of me in the roles I have, and likely God will look for different things in the future. This is the great adventure of following the

Lord. As a child, teen, and young adult I may be called to provide service to help those in need, I may be called to increase my love and connection with the Lord, preparing me for Christian living. As I grow older, I still may do many of these things, but when older I may offer financial supports to charity that I was unable to do when younger. I may have the vocation of parent and have many responsibilities in that role. I may do different kinds of service, prayer, and mentoring once I retire - it's all different depending on my age, abilities, resources, and talents.

What makes serving the Lord unique and different from just being a good citizen are two things. First, what we do as part of the Lord's body is not fully our choice. We are part of Jesus' body, not just our own body. When we leave the choices to Him as to how to use us, we help make a functioning body. Jesus will often call us for things that are in line with our talents and likes - but maybe not. Jonah really didn't want to go to Nineveh, Moses protested that he shouldn't be a spokesman because he stuttered, the Apostles called in the Gospel today thought they were not up to the task - but God knows best. Jesus called those fishermen to "fish for men" because he knew things about themselves that they didn't know - it's the same with us - Jesus knows the hidden potentials we don't realize. The second thing is that we do this as part of Jesus' Body and nourished by that same Body in the Eucharist. We are mandated to come to Mass each Sunday (the exceptions presented by COVID aside), because we need to connect with the Lord regularly, we need to hear him call out to us in the scriptures and in the homily, we need to be in the presence of Jesus in a powerful way, and we need to receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist to strengthen us and to help us be more and more his Body in this world.

We do good, we provide service, we minister to others not just because it's the right thing to do, but because we are being the presence of Jesus Himself in the world. To attempt to do this apart from the body of the Church, to attempt to do this apart from the call of Jesus telling us what His Body must do in each instance, to do this apart from a connection to that Body in the Eucharist makes us amateur social workers - not Christians. The ultimate goal is for that ministry and service to yield something beyond this world. Jesus called disciples to fish for people, not just to provide for other is the here and now, but also to lead them to a life beyond this life. As Jonah's obedience saved the Ninevites, our actions are meant to provide not only comfort and help in this life, but also to help to bring others to join Jesus an eternal life.