

The message for January 24 2021

This week's scripture comes from the book of Jonah and it goes like this - 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.

3 The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ² "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." ³ 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. ⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. ¹⁰ 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.

Last week's devotional focused on listening for the voice of God and our own call to our own personal ministry. In that devotional we read from the Book of Samuel, which was about how Samuel was called by the Lord. In the reading Samuel did not know he was being called by the Lord until Eli (the chief priest) told him that the Lord was talking to him.

In today's reading, we have Jonah also hearing the voice of the Lord and his call to a specific ministry. The first time Jonah heard the Lord, he ran away, scared to do what the Lord asked him to do. When he did this, he faced many, many challenges, for he turned away from the Lord. After all his challenges, he finally turned back to the Lord. When the Lord called upon him a second time to his ministry, he responded immediately. He went to the place the Lord asked him to go to give a difficult message to the King. In following the instructions of the Lord, Jonah saved the people of Nineveh.

In Samuel's case, he just did not know that God was calling to him. However, in Jonah's case he knew God called him and did not respond out of fear. Fear is one of the main reasons that many of us do not answer the call of God. Fear though,

can look very different for each of us. For some, fear comes from our concern over whether God is truly calling to us and what God is calling us to do. For others, fear comes from our not wanting to do what we think that God wants from us. For others, fear comes from our feeling that we are not gifted or talented or knowledgeable enough to do as God calls us to do.

Although all of these fears are valid, I believe the main fear that most of us have for not wanting to answer God's call is what we are going to have to give up in our lives in order to follow God's call. We are attached to life the way it is right now. We do not like change, for change brings us to the unknown. Change takes us out of our comfort zone. The more the attachments we have in life, the harder it is to let them go. The harder it is to take the leap of faith for what God can call us to do.

Jonah's call was an extreme call that took him far from his home and into a place that may have been dangerous. However, Samuel's call was not the same and not one that changed much in his life. These two examples show us that the call of God can cause some changes in our lives, but not necessarily. Even though Jonah's life was turned upside down, there was great reward from the work he did. I feel the same can happen for you. If you let go of the fears that hold you back from your call you too could help improve our world like Jonah did for the people of Nineveh.

The point I am trying to make to you is, please listen for God's call. Please respond to your personal call, whatever it may be. You will be surprised by how rewarding it is to answer the call, even if it takes you out of your comfort zone.

I can tell you personally it has been very rewarding and challenging all at the same time. Trusting in the Lord though and knowing the Lord is the greatest reward. When you respond you will be enhancing our community.

God Bless Pastor Paul