

## Order of Worship for July 2, 2023

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: “*Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me*” - Hymn #715

**Confession and Forgiveness:** pg.151

### Service of the Word

**Kyrie:** (“*Lord, Have Mercy*”) p. 152

**Hymn of Praise:** (“*This Is the Feast*”) p. 154

**Salutation:** p. 156

### Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, through the prophet Jonah, You continued the prophetic pattern of teaching Your people the true faith and demonstrating through miracles Your presence in creation to heal it of its brokenness. Grant that Your Church may see in Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the final end-times prophet, whose teaching and miracles continue in Your Church by the healing medicine of the Gospel and the Sacraments; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

### First Lesson – Jonah 1

R: Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” But Jonah rose 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 the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” Then the men were exceedingly 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.

Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.” So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Song of Jonah (from Jonah 2)**

**ALL: I called out to the LORD, and He answered me, and He answered me.**

P: I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and He answered me;

**C: out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.**

P: For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me;

**C: all Your waves and Your billows passed over me.**

P: Then I said, “I am driven away from Your sight;

**C: yet I shall again look upon Your holy temple.”**

**ALL: I called out to the Lord, and He answered me, and He answered me**

P: The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me;

**C: weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.**

P: I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever;

**C: yet You brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.**

P: When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord,

**C: and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple.**

**ALL: I called out to the LORD, and He answered me, and He answered me**

P: Those who pay regard to vain idols

**C: forsake their hope of steadfast love.**

P: But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You; what I have vowed I will pay.

**C: Salvation belongs to the LORD!**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**ALL: I called out to the LORD, and He answered me, and He answered me**

## **Second Lesson: Jonah 3**

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said he would do to them, and He did not do it.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Alleluia and Verse:** pg. 156

**Holy Gospel:**--Matthew 12:38-41

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Twelfth chapter

**C: Glory to You, O Lord. (sung)**

P: Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered [Jesus], saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from You." But He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

**C: Praise to You, O Christ. (sung)**

**Sermon Hymn:** "*All The Earth with Joy Is Sounding*" - Hymn #462

**Sermon:** "*Jonah the Prophet*"

Jonah is probably the best known of the Minor Prophets. The story of Jonah and the great fish is a standard story for Sunday school or other children's activities. It captures our imagination. But it seems unbelievable. It seems impossible that it happened. We usually think of Jonah's time in the big fish as the most unbelievable part of the story of Jonah. But that's not the most unbelievable part.

Jonah's story begins with a standard introduction; the word of the Lord comes to Jonah. It quickly takes a turn, as that word of God comes to Jonah and sends him to Nineveh. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, when the word of God comes to a prophet, he's sent to the people of God. They may

talk about other nations, they may give warnings to other nations, but they're not sent to other nations. Especially not Nineveh.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, a large, ruthless military machine. The atrocities their military committed still don't make for easy reading. Nineveh, as the capital, was so disliked and despised that, when the Assyrian Empire fell, it was so totally destroyed that it remained buried under the desert sands for over 2500 years. No one liked Nineveh, least of all citizens of Israel who were forced to pay outrageous tribute or face the wrath of the Assyrian armies.

Then comes the next unbelievable part of the story; that a prophet, someone called by God, would run away from God. Jonah rises and goes, but not where he's supposed to go. He heads in the opposite direction. Nineveh is east, so he heads west. The road to Nineveh is overland, so Jonah heads out to sea. Instead of following God's call to preach to that city, those people, Jonah ran from his call. Jonah didn't just run; he headed in the opposite direction, as far away in the known world as he could go.

Why? Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh. It's as if someone from the previous generation in the US were sent to Hanoi or Moscow; or to Berlin or Tokyo during the build-up before WWII. Jonah doesn't want to go, and even if he did, he knows the odds he gets out of it alive would be slim to none. And so Jonah gets on a ship heading west instead of on a road going east. And then we find yet another unbelievable part. The unbelieving sailors have more faith and trust in God than Jonah does. God doesn't give up that easily. God sends a great storm at the ship that Jonah is riding on. The sailors notice this storm is strange, unusual, supernatural. They figure out it has something to do with Jonah, the one who is trying to run away from the God who made the sea. In order to save the ship, Jonah is thrown into the sea, either in a self-sacrificing moment that changes his outlook, or a final attempt to avoid doing what God had called him to do. Jonah spends a few days in the belly of a great fish sent by God, where he finds the time to compose a poetic prayer that is a sort –of apology, sort of confession.

When Jonah gets spit up onto shore, we come to chapter three. "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time." God calls Jonah again, and gives him the same mission. This time, Jonah goes to Nineveh, where he preaches the shortest sermon on record. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Only five words in Hebrew!)

The response to this short, smelly, bitter message is that Jonah gets the whole city to repent. We see that the whole city, even down to the animals, puts on sackcloth and ashes, in an act of communal repentance. The message worked! God's word was spoken and heard, and everyone repented. Yet another unbelievable occurrence.

That, too, isn't the end of the story. It seems like it would be a good place to end. God's mission has been accomplished. Nineveh repents and is spared God's wrath. Everything is as it should be. Just say they lived happily ever after, roll the credits, and that's that.

But that's not the end of the story. While there is much rejoicing by God at the change in Nineveh, Jonah is not doing any rejoicing. After preaching that short sermon and seeing the response it received, Jonah tells God "Is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger

and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4:2-3).

Jonah wasn't a reluctant prophet because he was afraid of God's wrath, or afraid he would fail in his mission. He was reluctant, he ran because he knew what God would do if the people did repent, and that wasn't what he wanted. He wanted to watch fire and brimstone. He wanted to see God's wrath rain down on these people he so hated, on his enemies. He wanted judgment. But he doesn't get it.

Jonah then goes up to a hillside to watch God send in the fire and brimstone. Instead, the only thing he sees die is the plant that was giving him shade. God uses that as an object lesson. Jonah cared more about the plant than about his fellow humans. The God who knows when a hair falls or a bird dies cares even about the people who were actively trying to subjugate and eliminate God's chosen people. That's how much God cares. That's who God cares about.

In Jesus, God again brings a call to repentance and a message of salvation not just to the people of Israel, but to those of surrounding areas, and even to some who worked for or even were the occupying Romans. Jesus pointed back to the sign of Jonah, saying that “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39). Jesus was then called by God to go to the cross, where he would die for the sins of the whole world. But where Jonah ran, Jesus went willingly. Jesus even prayed for his enemies. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Then Jesus spent three days in the tomb before rising that first Easter to show us that the stink of sin and death had been defeated. He sent his apostles out to share that message of forgiveness with the whole world, even those that wanted to kill them. And they did. They shared the message of a merciful God with people of all nations.

What does this mean for us? It reminds us that racial and differences don't matter to God as much as we sometimes make them matter for us. Both the sailors and the people of Nineveh aren't followers of God by any stretch beforehand, but they at least come to some repentance and knowledge of God by the end. People don't always remain enemies, and the nature of their relationships can change. It's like how there are Lutheran missionaries, churches, and schools in Vietnam, which would have been unimaginable for people 50 years ago. It's like how missionaries in Germany need to know Farsi, because of the growing number of converts from Iranian immigrants.

It reminds us of the unbelievable grace and mercy of God. The mercy of a God who lets Abraham bargain him down to sparing Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous men, though not even that many are found. The mercy of a God who continues to call his people to repentance. The mercy of a God who delays judgment so that all may come to knowledge of the truth.

Jonah was a prophet but he never really got it. Jonah's hate for the people of Nineveh was great. Yet God's love for them, and for Jonah, was even greater. God loved Jonah so much that he used a big fish and storm to give Jonah a second chance. God loved the people of Nineveh so much he used even a reluctant prophet to call them to repentance. And then he loved them all so much he came into the world in Jesus. What an unbelievable story. What a wonderful story.

## **Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer**

### **Prayer of the Church:**

P: Lord, in Your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

### **Sharing Our Ministry**

#### **Offering/Voluntary:**

**Offertory:** *"What Shall I Render to the Lord?"* p. 159

## **Service of the Sacrament**

**Preface:** p. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father, for You show mercy on all even the wicked and desire that all people be saved through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

**Sanctus:** *(Holy, Holy, Holy)* p. 161

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

P: Blessed are You, Lord God, for You sent Jesus into this world to die on the cross with our sins and on the third day raised Him from the dead. Before He died He gave His disciples and us the wonderful supper of His true body and blood. Send Your Holy Spirit so that we receive this Sacrament in true faith, not doubting, but trusting Jesus' words that ny ot our sins are forgiven.

**C:Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer and Words of our Lord** p. 162

**Peace of the Lord and Agnus Dei:** *("Lamb of God")* p. 163

### **Distribution Hymns:**

*"Be Still, My Soul"* – **Hymn #752**

*"As Surely as I Live, God Said"* - **Hymn #614**

**Song After Communion:** *"Thank the Lord"* p. 164

### **Prayer After Communion:**

P: O God, as the prophet Jonah spent three days in the belly of the great fish, so Your Son Jesus spent three days in the heart of the earth. Grant us repentance to embrace our death in Him through Holy Baptism and to proclaim His victory over sin and death to all the world; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

**Blessing:** pg. 166

**Closing Hymn:** *"Eternal Father, Strong to Save"* - **Hymn #717 (Navy Hymn Verses)**

**Postlude**