**“Jonah Part 1: Jonah Flees” + Weekly Devotion + 3/15/2023**

*“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 evilhas come up before me.’ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” (Jonah 1:1-3)*

**Read Jonah 1:1-6**

Because it tells of a fish swallowing a man, many have dismissed the book of Jonah as fiction. But 2 Kings 14:25 mentions Jonah as living during the time of Jeroboam II (about 793-753 B.C.), and Jesus referred to Jonah as a historical person (Matthew 12:39-41). Unlike other prophetic books, Jonah focuses on the prophet himself rather than on his message.

The Lord commanded Jonah to preach against the people of Nineveh because of their wickedness. The prophet clearly refused to heed God’s call. In fact, Jonah was so reluctant to do what the Lord had called him to do that he hopped aboard a ship which was going in the opposite direction of Nineveh! Jonah sought to escape God’s presence, but such a thing isn’t possible. No one is able to escape the presence of an omniscient and omnipresent God.

The situation surrounding Jonah invites us to ask whether we’re reluctant to do what the Lord has called us to do? Indeed, we aren’t prophets, but God has given us specific responsibilities in specific vocations. Our duties are outlined for us in the Ten Commandments and in Luther’s *Small Catechism* (see the *Table of Duties* section for various passages of Scripture).

Each of us is given at least one vocation, sometimes more than one. God has called us to be faithful in our vocations as children, parents, husbands, wives, employers, employees, pastors, hearers, citizens, those holding various offices, etc. The question is, are we (like Jonah) reluctant to do what God has called us to do?

The truth is, we’re often reluctant like Jonah was. But, as we’ll soon see, God accomplishes His good purposes whether we like it or not. He won’t let us interfere with His good plans for His people. Thankfully though, God has promised to bless us and use our efforts (as selfish and imperfect as they are) to benefit those whom He has called us to serve.

And thanks be to God that He sent His Son to do for us what we (and Jonah) failed to do. Jesus wasn’t reluctant to accomplish our salvation. Rather, the author of Hebrews writes that Jesus endured the cross “for the joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). That joy is us! We are His joy! Christ endured the cross and despised its shame because He loves us and wants us to be with Him in His kingdom! Therefore, let us not be reluctant, but gladly and joyfully do what the Lord has called us to do.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, You weren’t reluctant to give Your life for us on the cross. Instead, You willingly submitted Yourself to Your Father’s will. Forgive us for our reluctance to serve You and those around us in our vocations. Send us Your Holy Spirit so that we may serve with clean hearts and pure minds. In Your holy name, Amen.