

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Mar 12th 2014

Jonah is described as a disobedient prophet. When first called to share the word of God, he literally ran the other way, only to be physically brought back by God to the place he began. The first reading picks up with Jonah when he has finally been convinced to share the word of God which has been revealed to him. Jonah convinces the town of Nineveh to repent and to fast. The town is so sincere in their actions that God chooses to spare them the evil that had been threatened. Rather than celebrating this mercy, if we keep reading in this chapter, we learn that this deeply angers Jonah. Jonah says, "I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, repenting of punishment..." Neither Jonah nor I were surprised by God's mercy in this passage. What intrigued me, invited me to read more was the opportunity to learn more about myself. Reading this passage, I too can imagine fleeing a prophetic call as Jonah did. It is not what I would pray for, but imagining myself in Jonah's shoes came easily, was even laughable. Fleeing, pouting and cursing life are all very human reactions to a greater call to be in deeper community with God and with one another. Add on to the difficult job, that prophets in our time are not taken all that seriously. Prophets are by their nature are lone voices calling out, calling us back to our ideals. Scarily, it seems, if they do happen to catch attention, it can be deadly: Dorothy Stang, Oscar Romero, or Juan Gerardi Conedera come to mind.

In spite of the reality of selfishness and desire to escape, there is a nagging in my heart when I see the world around me not living up to what we could be, what we are called to be. I know that this is my invitation to find my prophetic voice, in community. My meditation this day is with Jonah: how do I find the courage not to run? How do I find the peace to not be so attached to the results I seek, but to the results God seeks? How can I examine my own selfishness?

Joan Chittister in her book *The Cry of the Prophet: A Call to the Fullness of Life* in describing the call of prophets asks: "what can possibly be worth doing with so much passion? What can possibly need to be done in our world with such a commitment? And how do we know that what we are doing has that kind of eternal meaning? The answers, I think, lie in looking again at what prophets came to prophesy and why, and asking whether or not their messages have been heard."

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