

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
MARCH 23rd, 2020

Sacrifice

Bible Reading

Jonah 1 And of what people are you?" 9 "I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the LORD, the God of heaven...¹⁰ Then the men were even more 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 so. ¹¹ Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" ... He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you." ¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them....¹⁵ So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Context

Irony abounds as Jonah turns from Nineveh to avoid converting pagans, but this story ends when the pagan sailors worship and sacrifice to the LORD (Yahweh, the personal name of the Hebrew God used.) Jonah unintentionally turns disaster into hope when he finally stops thinking of himself and thinks of others, in this case the sailors.

Devotion

We naturally wonder what is behind Jonah's request to be thrown overboard. Did he repent? Would he rather die than follow God's path? We only know that Jonah turns very slowly, comically reflecting how slowly the church moves to God's direction.

In the end, Jonah offers the ultimate sacrifice saving the sailors (a prelude to Jesus sacrifice except that Jesus saves all, not just a few sailors.) We make many sacrifices for our careers, for our children, for our neighbors. The mystery remains why Jonah makes the sacrifice, but things begin to look up from here. Once again, the sailors made vows to the Lord on behalf of Jonah's sacrifice.

Reflection Questions

Do you think Jonah actually began to care about the pagans (the sailors as well as the Ninevites.) whom he so clearly hates at the outset of the story?

Describe one of your greatest sacrifices? I had the privilege to minister to two brothers while the one brother gave his kidney to the other brother. That sacrifice was inspiring.

Prayer

Merciful Spirit, grant us the courage to trust and to live sacrificial lives. In Jesus name. Amen.