

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
MARCH 1ST, 2020

Running Away

Bible Reading

Jonah 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.”
³But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Context

Nineveh boasts herself as the great city of Assyria. The Assyrians’ brutal reputation surpassed any other evil empire of that day. Torture and terror are the handmaidens of emperor Salmeser III. Going to Nineveh would scare any foreigner and Jews rarely went to any gentile lands.

Devotion

How long would a Jewish Rabbi last in Berlin, 1941 proclaiming repentance to the Nazi regime? It is difficult to imagine Jonah’s fear, but that is essentially what God is asking Jonah to do. Jonah takes issue with God. He will question God’s purpose and justice behind the unreasonable request.

We listen to the doctor’s pessimistic diagnosis and lament God’s injustice. How can you do this God if you are good? In the end, we often run away from God like Jonah.

Read the parallel story in Luke 15 describing how both sons “run away” from God (the Father in the parable.) One way to run is simply to ignore God and do whatever pleases us like the younger son (hedonism.) Another way to run originates from legalism. The older son has followed every dot and tittle of the law, therefore expects to be rewarded for his good behavior. He has relied not on God, not on faith, but justified himself. As we move through Jonah, we find his behavior representative of both sons.

Reflection Questions

Other than the obvious fear of the enemy, why do you believe Jonah fled the opposite way from God’s request?

Name a time in your life that you felt God was unjust.

Prayer

Merciful Father, grant us courage and faith to follow where you have led us. In Jesus name.
Amen.