

Lenten Reflections

March 4, 2020



St Francis Receiving the Stigmata – El Greco – Public Domain

<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/6457/saint-francis-receiving-the-stigmata-2/>

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time...”

“When did the word of the LORD come to Jonah the first time?” and, “What meaning can beginning-in-the-middle hold for us this season of Lent?” These questions teased my heart as I studied the day’s readings.

The first question is easy to answer for many of us. Jonah’s story is as familiar as it is brief. A fictional man whose name means dove (sign of covenant and symbol of peace) is called to deliver an as-yet-unknown message to the people of Nineveh. In every space that Jonah is said to have occupied—on the ship, in the whale, and throughout Nineveh—the people who hear his preaching turn humbly to God in the hope of salvation. Jonah must simply open his mouth and give voice to the truth.

Essentially, the problem with Jonah is that he lives in contradiction. His actions, as we learn in the next and final chapter, do not clearly reflect his being made in the image and likeness of a loving and merciful God.

We have “only gone but a single day’s walk” into Lent 2020. So, let us ask ourselves:

- ✦ When we teach (whether formally in the classroom or informally at home or at work) do the words we speak to our learners resound in our action?
- ✦ If the word of the LORD, in coming to us a second, third, or twenty-fourth time, demands that we make a course correction, how far are we willing to go?
- ✦ Do we have the courage to look back with clarity before attempting to right our ship?

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Wednesday of the First Week in Lent

Lectionary: 226

Reading 1 [JON 3:1-10](#)

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

“Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you.”

So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD’s bidding.

Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;
it took three days to go through it.

Jonah began his journey through the city,
and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing,
“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,”

when the people of Nineveh believed God;
they proclaimed a fast
and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the king of Nineveh,
he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe,
covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes.

Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh,
by decree of the king and his nobles:

“Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep,
shall taste anything;
they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water.

Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God;
every man shall turn from his evil way
and from the violence he has in hand.

Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withhold his blazing wrath,
so that we shall not perish.”

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way,
he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;
he did not carry it out.

Responsorial Psalm [51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19](#)

R. (19b) **A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt
and of my sin cleanse me.

R. **A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.**

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence,

and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

For you are not pleased with sacrifices;

should I offer a burnt offering, you would not accept it.

My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;

a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

R. A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Verse Before The Gospel [JL 2:12-13](#)

Even now, says the LORD,

return to me with your whole heart

for I am gracious and merciful.

Gospel [LK 11:29-32](#)

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them,

“This generation is an evil generation;

it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it,

except the sign of Jonah.

Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites,

so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

At the judgment

the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation

and she will condemn them,

because she came from the ends of the earth

to hear the wisdom of Solomon,

and there is something greater than Solomon here.

At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation

and condemn it,

because at the preaching of Jonah they repented,

and there is something greater than Jonah here.”