

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 1.31.21 Jonah 3, Mark 1:14-20

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ Amen!

When I think back to that Christmas so long ago where I knew immediately how important that Lego set was to me, how excited I became, hearing those shouts, I feel like I've lost something as an adult. And it's something I feel like I'm always chasing now.

When I was a child I had this freedom to see what was important and a freedom to go after it. I wasn't embarrassed to shout for joy in front of my whole family and run around showing everyone just how incredible this was.

And yet as an adult I can't help but always feel something else mixed in when I'm that excited. Maybe this is true for you. When you finally see that thing, whatever it is, and you have that feeling grow inside of you, That feeling of excitement and anticipation, that sure knowledge of this is exactly what I want and need, that pull to claim it, that drive to lift it up and shout to the world that here it is, can you all see it, it just gets tainted by this other shadowy voice that says

You'll look stupid, they won't be as excited, they won't care, in fact they probably won't like it at all and will say that its dumb for you to even like that.

And so that thing that was so pure when we didn't care about anything else becomes not nearly what it could be to us ever again.

And when this happens to us again and again and again we stop even letting ourselves start to feel that sense of earnest, that sense of impending joy. Ya'll are going to have to tell me if I'm going out on a branch here, but I don't think this branch is getting too thin.

We stop letting ourselves see the joy that is right in front of us for all the different reasons that life has to offer. And soon enough we are only defining what is good in the world against the backslash of everything that is wrong.

The good things become silhouettes against a bright background of pain, turmoil, injustice, hardship, hatred and division.

That's what I see when I look around far too often, when I see our news stations showing us what is important, when I see on Facebook and other social media what other people what they think is important. That's what I see when I look at both political parties.

This isn't something that has just happened in the last 20 days, or 20 years or 20 centuries.

We look at our first bible reading today from Jonah. Jonah is driven not by what is important, what he holds dear and is worthy, no Jonah is driven by his hatred and loathing for the first half of his story.

He hears that God is going to wipe 100,000 of his enemies of the face of the planet. Well that's perfect. That's what Jonah wants. That's the good news for Jonah, a whole bunch of death and destruction.

But as it turns out, what Jonah wants is not what God wants. The gets thrown overboard and gets swallowed alive by a fish/whale/sea creature. Gets spit up on land after apologizing to God.

That's when we meet up with Jonah in chapter 3. He On Land and God says go and Jonah Goes. Now this is a perspective shift for Jonah. Instead of seeing, again, those silhouettes of what are important, they are finally in the forefront and finally in full view. Instead of focusing on all that distracting stuff, he finally able to see what's worthy of his time and abilities.

And that same message is echoed in our Gospel message, our message of good news for today. Jesus, Son of God, walks up to a group of total strangers. These men are doing what is important to them. They are working hard at the job they are good at, the job that is feeding them and their family, the thing they know how to do well, the thing they have always done. Jesus walks up to them says just Come, Follow me.

What would it take for you to listen to that call? Do you ever wonder? I find it hard to even imagine what it would take for some guy to walk up to me, say come follow me, and then for to leave everything I ever knew and follow him.

Of course, we are talking about God here. There must have been something about looking him in the eyes and hearing his voice where you would just know, you would be able to feel in your heart and very soul the worth of this man standing before you. You would know what those simple words would lead to.

There is something about Jesus that when encountered, immediately changes the perspective of all these men and the immediately without hesitation or thought get up and follow.

This is a testament to how God brings clarity and something firm to hold onto. Before these disciples was something concrete and something beyond value. Before us is something worthy, concrete, and beyond value that is calling us today. We are gathered today because we know the grace and peace of our God. We are gathered to be made anew. We are gathered to hear the God's call in our lives. We are gathered to feel the pull of the holy spirit on our hearts.

We have come to put aside all those things that whisper and to just know and dwell in the joy and presence of our God. And when we leave, when we walk into the wider world we hold onto our God, we follow our God. We remember the worth of our God and live out that joy in our actions with all our neighbors un-ashamedly. Amen.