



## Grain

“Maybe God has a word for you to speak in Nineveh, a word that you are taking a little too long to say. Feel around with your feet. If those are fish guts slopping under your shoes, chances are you’re on your way to the beach in the belly of a fish and it’s for your own good. Best not to fight it. Hunker down. Use the time to get your head on straight. Pray like Jonah. Sing like Jonah. Prepare for a wet landing.”

—Rev. Dr. Anna Carter

## Field

<sup>3</sup>The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. <sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. Jonah 3:1-5, 10

## Thoughts

Do you ever feel as though some of the Old Testament prophets get a little intense? Can’t they relax? Or, speaking from the core of their being did they have a solid sense of peace they always returned to while stirred by an irresistible drive to speak? We don’t know their thought processes. We focus on their messages, as we do with modern-day prophets such as the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. But Jonah reveals more about a struggle to follow God’s call than prophetic words.

The book begins with Jonah dashing in the opposite direction of where God directed him. “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” *Speak a difficult truth? Me? Go east to Nineveh? Um, I think I’ll just head west to Tarshish for a bit. Here’s my ride.* When a storm at sea raged and rocked the boat Jonah had boarded for Tarshish, Jonah managed to go below deck. When the crew found him sleeping, they said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your God.” Jonah admitted to the crew that he had run away from God and wanted them to throw him into the sea, which they reluctantly ended up doing. God provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah prayed a beautiful prayer from the depths of his being while in the fish. After three days he was spit out. Finally, he was ready to speak, and told the people of Nineveh to repent. They did, but where was his prophet’s rebuke? It didn’t seem right that these sinful people actually listened and turned to God.

Some refer to the short book of Jonah as a satire based on an obscure prophet during Jeroboam’s reign, when God showed mercy toward Assyria. From beginning to end, Jonah offers comic relief in his getting so much wrong. The book exudes God’s mercy but is also about a prophet’s internal journey. Jonah ran away from God, was woken up, captured again by the word, and returned from idols (see his prayer in Ch. 2) to what mattered, and then spoke truth to power without having control over the consequences of his speech.

Find peace and mercy in God and listen to how we are stirred to act from our core. Like Jonah, we sometimes take a while to speak words that have been waiting to be released. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy