

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR JANUARY 21, 2024

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

- Why did Jonah not want to go to Ninevah? Ninevah represented the enemy of the Northern kingdom of Israel, capital of the Assyrian Empire, who would lead Israel into exile in 722/721 BC. Read over the following passage from Nahum 3:1-7 for a contrasting view of Ninevah:

Ah! City of bloodshed,
utterly deceitful, full of booty—
no end to the plunder!
The crack of whip and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
piles of dead,
heaps of corpses,
dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute,
gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery,

who enslaves nations through her debaucheries,
and peoples through her sorcery,
I am against you,
says the LORD of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts over your face;
and I will let nations look on your nakedness
and kingdoms on your shame.
I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt,
and make you a spectacle.
Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,
‘Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?’
Where shall I seek comforters for you?

- The message of Jonah is that God’s mercy is for all people, even our enemies. Who would be a group of people that you would struggle to see under God’s mercy? What can you do about that struggle?
- Read over these words of Jesus: “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:39-40) What do you think is meant by “the sign of Jonah”?

Psalm 62:5-12

- “Put your trust in God always” – when do you find it hardest to trust in God: in good times or bad?
- What do you think the Psalmist meant by “God has spoken once, twice have I heard it”?

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

- Paul writes these words expecting the imminent return of Jesus. How are we called to live out and understand these words now, when the return is no longer imminent?
- We live in a world of change, where it does seem that “the present form of this world is passing away.” How might these words of Paul help us to live in our changing times?

Mark 1:14-20

- Contrast the response of these disciples with the response of Jonah. How are they different? Which one are you more like?
- What do you think Jesus meant by “fish for people”? Do we do a good job of that as a church?