

The Resurrection of Our Lord – March 27, 2016

Text: Jonah 3:5-10

Theme: About Face

**A strange Easter morning text to be sure. But during the midweek services we have been hearing from the book of Jonah and we need to finish his story. It didn't work out for him after all. He was called to Nineveh to preach to the city that God was about to destroy because of their evil but he didn't want to do that unpleasant task so he boarded a ship for Tarshish.**

**God sent a great storm and the sailors figured out that he was angry about something. They cast lots to decide who was at fault and the lot landed on Jonah so they bound him and threw him overboard. He sank to the bottom to drown except God sent a big fish of some kind to swallow him. Apparently there were air pockets in the fish and Jonah spent 3 days lying in fish guts and praying to God about how sorry he was that he disobeyed.**

**The fish vomited him up onto shore and Jonah got a second chance to go to Nineveh and do what God had told him to do in the first place. Jonah's only consolation was that he would get to see God wipe out an entire city. What would it be? Fire and brimstone? Hail and tornados? Earthquake? It was bound to be good.**

**Jonah was a self-righteous, pompous, self-centered brat. He had just been forgiven for his disobedience and given a second chance and what was he doing? Drooling over the idea that the people of Nineveh were about to be destroyed for their disobedience. If Jonah were alive today, I have no doubt that he would hold a high political office. He might even be made king. Lately I have seen a great many political ads that are focused far more on what is wrong with the other guy and seems to completely avoid saying anything about issues and positions.**

**Sadly, we are too often like Jonah. We slander and gossip and judge but rarely look at ourselves. Or perhaps we slander, gossip and judge to avoid looking at ourselves. We call down evil upon people for wrongs that we perceive and all but ignore the vast forgiveness we ourselves have received. God had planned to destroy Nineveh, but they repented of their faithlessness and God did what God does.**

**God did something Jonah never expected, and Jonah got pretty angry about it with God. The people of Nineveh repented and God forgave them. Hold on now! That's it? After all the evil they did, bad enough to merit the destruction of their entire city, after all that,**

**God just forgives? No fire? No brimstone? Not even a few wimpy plagues? God is no fun at all. How dare he forgive!**

**On this day of the resurrection we celebrate that God is not interested in destroying but in saving. He sent Jonah to Nineveh in order that he might save Nineveh. He sent his own son to us in order that he might do likewise. Jesus paid for all of our sin by suffering Hell and dying on the cross. And we are completely forgiven. Everything we ever did wrong is wiped away. There is no debt for us to pay for it has all been paid by Christ.**

**There are some Jonahs out there looking at us and thinking, that's just too easy. Those people are sinners! They lie. They cheat. They drink too much. They break the law. And now, just because they say they're sorry, God is going to forgive them? Yep. That's about it. Today is the day we celebrate Christ rising from the dead and proving to us and all the world that his sacrifice on our behalf had been accepted.**

**The work was done on the cross on Good Friday when Jesus declared, "It is finished!" Nothing more can be done. When the debt is paid, we don't continue paying. When my American Express has a zero balance, I don't send in another \$200 for good measure.**

**I don't feel guilty for having had a balance. When the debt is paid off, I'm done!**

**You and I are eternally free and eternally forgiven. No one can take that from us. Be sure that the Jonahs of the world will try to make us doubt our salvation. They will bring up old sins. They will try to guilt us and shame us for not being holy enough. So let's clear that up right now. We're not holy. We never have been holy. If we were able to be holy without Christ, we wouldn't need Christ. If we were able to make this world a perfect and joyous place, we wouldn't need Christ. If we were able to purchase our own redemption, we wouldn't need Christ. But we are poor miserable sinners, and we do need Christ. Happily for us, we have Christ, and we have eternal life with Christ, and we have eternal life with everyone who has died in faith before us.**

**Look at the bulletin cover for today. Christ is walking out of the tomb. Hundreds of people saw him alive after he had been crucified. He ate and drank with people, proving that he was alive and well. God did an about face just as he had in the days of Jonah and instead of destroying us, he sent his son to redeem us. Christ is Risen, He has Risen indeed. Alleluia!**