

# THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY



"God is my strong rock and refuge"

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

## **THE CONFESSION**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor:

God of all mercy,  
we confess that we have sinned against you,  
opposing your will in our lives.  
We have denied your goodness in each other,  
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.  
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,  
the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf.  
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ,  
that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.



Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

## **JUBILATE**

Be joyful in Lord, all you lands;\*  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.

Know this: The Lord himself is God;\*  
he himself has made us and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;  
go into his courts with praise;\*  
give thanks to him and and call upon his Name.

For the Lord is good;  
his mercy is everlasting;\*  
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

## **Psalm 62:6-14**

### *Nonne Deo?*

6 For God alone my soul in silence waits; \*  
truly, my hope is in him.  
7 He alone is my rock and my salvation, \*  
my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.  
8 In God is my safety and my honor; \*  
God is my strong rock and my refuge.  
9 Put your trust in him always, O people, \*  
pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.  
10 Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath, \*  
even those of low estate cannot be trusted.  
11 On the scales they are lighter than a breath, \*  
all of them together.  
12 Put no trust in extortion;  
in robbery take no empty pride; \*  
though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.  
13 God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, \*  
that power belongs to God.  
14 Steadfast love is yours, O Lord, \*  
for you repay everyone according to his deeds.

## **THE FIRST LESSON**

### **Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” 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. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

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.

## **THE CANTICLE**

Eternal light, shine in my heart;  
eternal hope lift up my eyes;  
eternal power, be my support;  
eternal wisdom make me wise.

Eternal life, raise me from death;  
eternal brightness, help me see;  
eternal Spirit, give me breath;  
eternal Savior, come to me;  
until by your most costly grace,  
invited by you holy word,  
at last I come before your face  
to know you, my eternal God.

*(c) Christopher Idle  
(TH 1982 #465)*

## **THE SECOND LESSON (Alternate selection)**

### **Matthew 16:1-4**

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” Then he left them and went away.

**Other assigned lesson: 1 Corinthians: 1:29-31 and Mark 1:14-20**

## **REFLECTION**

by  
Norm Wright

**Eternal power, be our support.  
Amen.**



The story of “Jonah and the whale” is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible, and it is that particular part of Jonah’s story which sticks with most people but there is far more to his story than being swallowed by a big fish and the city of Nineveh being spared. The main focus of this story is Jonah himself, an individual called by God to be God’s prophet.

The story of Jonah begins with Jonah trying to duck out of his obligation to deliver a devastating message from God to the people of Nineveh by taking a cruise to Tarshish in order to get as far away from Nineveh as he could. While out to sea, the ship he is on encounters a storm and begins to sink. Jonah confesses the ship is going to sink because he is trying to evade his calling. He tells the captain and crew to throw him overboard in order to save themselves. They try to

row to shore to avoid that option but their attempt proves futile. Then, *repenting for any wrongdoing they might commit*, they throw Jonah overboard. Immediately, Jonah finds himself swallowed by a big fish in whose belly he remains for three days and nights. During that time, Jonah becomes repentant and is belched up on a beach pointed in the direction of Nineveh, which is where our first lesson picks up the story.

The story continues after the people of Nineveh repent. Jonah goes a distance from the city in a huff to sulk because he is angry that they were saved and builds a makeshift shelter to stay out of the sun. God come to his assistance by having a bush to grow to provide extra shade. Jonah is pleased with the bush but doesn't take care of it. Overnight the plant dies and Jonah starts to complain about the plant dying. At that point, God questions him with the following:

*But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, **angry enough to die.**" Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?" [Jonah 4:9-11]*

With that question the story of Jonah ends.

Jonah's story is a parabolic story that presents a dramatic scenario in order to teach us something about ourselves and our God. It brings to mind Jesus' use of parables like the "Good Samaritan" and the "Prodigal Son," which he used to show us ourselves and our capacity to act like the characters in those stories. The story of Jonah personifies the stubbornness of people who know better but refuse to do better simply because of their personal fear and hatred of someone or something.

Jonah's dramatic scenario is centered around God sending him to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire to warn its people of its imminent destruction. The Assyrian Empire was noted for its excessive cruelty to those it defeated. Assyria was the empire that destroyed the Kingdom of Israel and carted its populace into captivity. They were very close to destroying Jerusalem but were prevented by a plague that wiped out the army [See 2 Kings 19]. They were ultimately defeated by the Babylonians.

For Jews returning from the Babylonian exile, the memories of the Assyrians were far more dreadful than the Babylonians who eventually destroyed both the Temple and Jerusalem and took them into captivity. The likelihood of God sending a prophet to a people considered more heinous than the Babylonians in order to tell them God was going to destroy them, yet alone save them, had to strike those who heard this story as an utterly ridiculous notion as it did for Jonah.

Ironically, Jonah's fear was centered in knowing God to be merciful. His fear was that the people of Nineveh would receive the message he was sent to give, repent, and God would spare them, which is exactly what happened. Jonah was so entrenched in his hatred of the people of Nineveh that he preferred death rather than be involved in their salvation.

That sounds really messed up, doesn't it?

Jesus used this story to demonstrate how messed up things were during his time. In today's lesson from Luke, the main religious/political groups of Jesus' day were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. For the most part, they were ideologically opposed to one another but who, on rare occasion, might come together when there was someone like a would-be messiah who threatened their status quo. Like Jonah, they knew what God required (to be just, merciful, and walk humbly with God) but they were so entrenched in their differing views on Judaism and maintaining a hold on their lifestyles that they had little time for anything else.

Jesus was not about to play their give-us-a-heavenly-sign game. Instead, Jesus gave them a down to earth sign. Paraphrasing Jesus' response in our second lesson, Jesus was telling them, "You already know the signs. You already know what God wants, but if you want a sign. I'll give you one, the story of Jonah. Do you see yourselves and what you are doing in Jonah's story? Do you see yourselves running from the what the Lord requires in order to stay entrenched in the misery of your religious and political haggling?"

Jonah's story is a story for every age, including our own. The story of Jonah serves to remind us that, as children of God, we cannot escape God. God goes where we go and God's will is done even if we don't like it.

We all have Jonah moments in our lives. We all have moments when we know better but fail to do better.

Like Jonah, we can try and escape our callings as God's children. We can try to do our own thing and have it our way.

Like Jonah, we can ride the troubled seas of our making only to find ourselves swallowed up in the misery we created.

Like Jonah, we can become entrenched in our idealism, our fear of those we perceive to be our enemies, and our hatred of those we find disagreeable.

We need to consider who are the Assyrians of our day and in our lives? Who do we fear so much that we would not wish them to exist? Is it a nation? Is it some ideological group? Is it a person?

If there is an answer to any of these questions, consider placing those answers in the context of God's closing question to Jonah in order to understand the direction God is pointing us in.

\* \* \* \* \*

God of mercy, have mercy on us, break the bonds of our fear and hatred, strengthen our faith so that we may live in peace with one another, and instill hope within our hearts that we may live according to your will through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*HYMN*

*O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home;*

*under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure;  
sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defense is sure.*

*Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame,  
from everlasting thou art God, to endless years the same.*

*A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone;  
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.*

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all our years away;  
they fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.*

*O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
be thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home.*

*(IssacWatts 1674-1745)*

*(TH 1982 # 680)*



### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **THE COLLECT OF THE DAY**

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for all those who are suffering from the effects of Covid-19. We pray for those in church family and those requesting our prayers: Bernard, Sue, Pat Christensen, Bev Ann, Pat Michels, Jolene, Darold, Somer, Ryan, and for those we hold in our hearts. May all those in need experience the comfort and healing of your presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays: Barb Black (Jan. 31), Cade Newland (Feb. 1), Kierra Koster, and Somer Barres (Feb. 3). We also pray for



those celebrating anniversaries: John Keyes and Jo Neubauer (Feb. 6) May they find joy, happiness, and fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services, first responders, fire fighters, police. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in times of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good will of others here at home and in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. On this Sunday we pray for Max Hawk. May he and all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for all bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve your Church. Grant them guidance in their various ministries and guide us in our mission to enlarge the Family of Faith in our midst.

### **A PRAYER FOR OUR NATION**

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### **THE PRAYER FOR MISSION**

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent you blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into you fold; pour out you Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of you kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**MAY THE LORD BLESS US AND KEEP US.  
MAY THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US AND BE  
GRACIOUS UNTO US.  
MAY THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON US AND GIVE US  
PEACE. AMEN**

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