***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Worship Series – Week 4**

***Nine Words That Changed Everything – Jonah***

**March 27, 2022**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Missionary Moment**

**Announcements and Offering**

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| **SB#55 – Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven** | TB-406 – Praise, my soul | HTD2-T12 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#1/SOS#2 – A mighty fortress is our God** | TB-605 – Ein’ feste Burg  SOS-2 | HTD3-T10 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#38/HC#298 – Jehovah is our strength** | TB-200 – Darwalls  HC-298 | HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)  HCD28-T18 |
| **SB#51 – O thou God of full salvation** | TB-360 – Bethany  TB-404 – Love Divine | HTD11-T1 (4 vs.)  No HT CD |
| **SB#52/SOS#17 – O worship the king** | TB-479 – Hanover  SOS-17  HC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)  HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#56/HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den Herren  HC-251 | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD24-T11 |
| **SB#97/HC#221 – Ye servants of God** | TB-479 – Hanover  HC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)  HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#509/SOS#106 – O boundless salvation!** | TB-506 – My Jesus, I love Thee | HTD2-T3 (4 vs.) |

**Call to Worship:**

Sin is rampant in society—daily headlines and overflowing prisons bear dramatic witness to that fact. With child abuse, pornography, serial killings, terrorism, anarchy, and ruthless dictatorships, the world seems to be filled to overflowing with violence, hatred, and corruption. Reading, hearing, and perhaps even experiencing these tragedies, we begin to understand the necessity of God’s judgment. We may even find ourselves wishing for vengeance by any means upon the violent perpetrators. Surely, they are beyond redemption! But suppose that in the midst of such thoughts, God told you to take the gospel to the worst of the offenders—how would you respond?

Jonah was given such a task. Assyria—a great but evil empire—was Israel’s most dreaded enemy. The Assyrians flaunted their power before God and the world through numerous acts of heartless cruelty. So, when Jonah heard God tell him to go to Assyria and call the people to repentance, he ran in the opposite direction.

Here is the story of Jonah:

(*Life Application Bible*, p. 1559)

***Running Away from God***

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| **Children’s Moment** |

### *At the Bottom of the Sea*

**Responsive Scripture:**

**Leader: 2 1-9**Then Jonah prayed to his God from the belly of the fish. He prayed:

**ALL:** “In trouble, deep trouble, I prayed to God.  
    He answered me.  
From the belly of the grave I cried, ‘Help!’  
    You heard my cry.

**Men:** You threw me into ocean’s depths,  
    into a watery grave,  
With ocean waves, ocean breakers  
    crashing over me.

**Women:** I said, ‘I’ve been thrown away,  
    thrown out, out of your sight.  
I’ll never again lay eyes  
    on your Holy Temple.’

**Leader:** Ocean gripped me by the throat.  
    The ancient Abyss grabbed me and held tight.  
My head was all tangled in seaweed  
    at the bottom of the sea where the mountains take root.

**ALL:** I was as far down as a body can go,

and the gates were slamming shut behind me forever—  
 you pulled me up from that grave alive,  
 O God, my God!

**Women:** When my life was slipping away,  
    I remembered God,  
And my prayer got through to you,  
    made it all the way to your Holy Temple.

**Men:** Those who worship hollow gods, god-frauds,  
    walk away from their only true love.  
But I’m worshiping you, God,  
    calling out in thanksgiving!

**ALL:** And I’ll do what I promised I’d do!  
    Salvation belongs to God!”

Jonah 2:1-9 (MSG)

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| **SB#781 – Our Father, who in Heaven art** | TB-70 – Fewster | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#109/SOS#21 – Total Praise** | HC-109  SOS-21 | HCD9-T19 |
| **HC#213/SOS#14 – In the Presence of Jehovah** | HC-213  SOS-14 | HCD20-T13 |
| **SB#369/HC#119/SOS#37 – I love You, Lord** | TB-679 – same  HC-119  SOS-37 | No HT CD  HCD10-T19 |
| **SB#509/SOS#106 – O boundless salvation!** | TB-506 – My Jesus, I love Thee | HTD2-T3 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |

### *Maybe God Will Change His Mind*

**Responsive Scripture:**

**Leader: 1-2**Next, God spoke to Jonah a second time:

**All:** “Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They’re in a bad way and I can’t ignore it any longer.”

**Leader:** **3**This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying God’s orders to the letter. Nineveh was a big city, very big—it took three days to walk across it. **4**Jonah entered the city, went one day’s walk and preached, ***“Just forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown!”***

**All:** **5**The people of Nineveh listened, and trusted God. They proclaimed a citywide fast and dressed in burlap to show their repentance. Everyone did it—rich and poor, famous and obscure, leaders and followers.

**Leader: 6-9**When the message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up off his throne, threw down his royal robes, dressed in burlap, and sat down in the dirt. Then he issued a public proclamation throughout Nineveh, authorized by him and his leaders:

**Women:** “Not one drop of water, not one bite of food for man, woman, or animal, including your herds and flocks! Dress them all, both people and animals, in burlap, and send up a cry for help to God.

**Men:** Everyone must turn around, turn back from an evil life and the violent ways that stain their hands. Who knows? Maybe God will turn around and change his mind about us, quit being angry with us and let us live!”

**Leader:** **10**God saw what they had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He *did* change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn’t do.

Jonah 4:1-10 (VOICE)

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| **SB#456 – Dear Lord and Father of mankind** | TB-105 – Repton | HTD8-T13 (3 vs.) |

**[Congregational prayer, please print in bulletin.]**

**Congregational Prayer:**

Loving God, your way and your will are far beyond our ways, our will, and our desires. Thank you for people like Jonah who remind us of this through his life, through his reluctance, and especially through the ways you worked through the best of him while honoring his struggles. The Kingdom is coming, and your grace is amazing and transformative. Thank you for the ways we can begin to practice and live into this amazing grace. Come Holy Spirit come. Amen.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 54)

***I Knew This was Going to Happen***

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| **Drama: SPF 100** |

**Message – *Nine Words That Changed Everything – Jonah***

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| **SB#467 – If human hearts are often tender** | TB-17 – How much more | HTD1-T13 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#109/SOS#21 – Total Praise** | HC-109  SOS-21 | HCD9-T19 |
| **HC#213/SOS#14 – In the Presence of Jehovah** | HC-213  SOS-14 | HCD20-T13 |
| **SB#369/HC#119/SOS#37 – I love You, Lord** | TB-679 – same  HC-119  SOS-37 | No HT CD  HCD10-T19 |
| **SB#453/SOS#78 – Amazing grace!** | TB-57 – same  SOS-78 | HTD3-T2 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |

**Benediction:**

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NIV)

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| **SB#453/SOS#78 – Amazing grace!** | TB-57 – same  SOS-78 | HTD3-T2 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#509/SOS#106 – O boundless salvation!** | TB-506 – My Jesus, I love Thee | HTD2-T3 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#819/HC#202 – O Church, arise** | TB-777 – same  HC-202 | No HT CD  HCD19-T12 |
| **SB#936 – Wanted, hearts baptized with fire** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  TB-394 – Austria  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (4 vs.)  HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **SB#938 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-361 – Blaenwern  TB-394 – Austria | HTD5-T3 (3 vs.) HTD1-T2 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#1031/HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence** | TB-740 – same  HC-283 | No HT CD  HCD27-T13 |

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| **Lent 2022 Week #4** | |
| **DRAMA**  **SPF 100**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Mercy, Forgiveness |
| **Scripture:** | Jonah 4 |
| **Synopsis:** | Jonah tries to find relief from the sun. |
| **Characters:** | Jonah – a prophet of God  Sam – a store clerk |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Casual dress, sunglasses, a large hat, an oversized drink cup, and a bottle of sunscreen for Jonah. A blue shirt and khakis for Sam. |
| **Setting:** | The aisle of a drug store. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Jonah enters and walks back and forth as if searching for something on a shelf. He has an oversized drink cup and a bottle of sunscreen in his hand. He is carefully examining the sunscreen.*]

**Sam:** [*enters and approaches Jonah*] Can I help you find something?

**Jonah:** [*holding up the sunscreen*] Do you have anything stronger than this?

**Sam:** [*takes bottle*] This is SPF 100. It blocks out 99% of the sun’s harmful rays.

**Jonah:** Then shouldn’t it be SPF 99? Do you have an SPF 101 or maybe 200?

**Sam:** [*handing the bottle back*] Sorry, we don’t have anything stronger. [*gesturing at Jonah’s attire*] I take it you’re planning on being out in the sun for a while.

**Jonah:** You could say that.

**Sam:** Beach day?

**Jonah:** [*taking a sip from his cup*] No, I think it’ll be a long time before I go anywhere near the ocean.

**Sam:** Then a picnic maybe?

**Jonah:** No, I’m just going to be sitting up on a hill outside of town.

**Sam:** That doesn’t sound too exciting. You know it’s going to be sunny and 90 today, right?

**Jonah:** That’s why I have all this stuff. And that’s why I need the strongest sunscreen you have.

**Sam:** Well, you have it. But it looks like you may have burned a little already.

**Jonah:** I know. I’ve already been out there.

**Sam:** Without sunscreen?

**Jonah:** Well, I was waiting.

**Sam:** For what?

**Jonah:** The city to be destroyed.

**Sam:** [*in disbelief*] I beg your pardon.

**Jonah:** I was waiting for God to destroy Nineveh.

**Sam:** Why would he do that?

**Jonah:** Because he said so.

**Sam:** But why?

**Jonah:** Because Nineveh is an evil city. I spent three days going through the city telling people that if they didn’t repent that God would destroy the city.

**Sam:** Oh, you’re that guy. But we’re still here.

**Jonah:** I know. Because, low and behold, people repented. Even the king.

**Sam:** But you went up on the hill anyway?

**Jonah:** Yeah, I was hoping.

**Sam:** Hoping for what?

**Jonah:** God to destroy the city.

**Sam:** But I thought you said we repented?

**Jonah:** You did. But I was hoping God would still bring judgment, so I waited.

**Sam:** In the blazing heat?

**Jonah:** See, that’s the thing. As I was sitting there waiting, this leafy plant grew up over me and gave me shade.

**Sam:** [*unimpressed*] How nice for you.

**Jonah:** But then just like that, it was gone.

**Sam:** That explains the sunburn.

**Jonah:** Yeah, and I may have said a few choice words to God about it.

**Sam:** Over a plant?

**Jonah:** [*explaining*] My shade was gone.

**Sam:** Let me get this straight. You were more concerned over a plant that you had nothing to do with than a city of 120,000 people that repented when you told them?

**Jonah:** That’s what God asked me.

**Sam:** Smart God.

**Jonah:** So anyway, since the plant is gone, I need to find other ways of keeping cool.

**Sam:** Why don’t you forget about vengeance, celebrate God having mercy on this city, and go cool off at our new water park?

**Jonah:** I think I’d rather be miserable.

**Sam:** Then you won’t be needing this. [*takes the sunscreen, turns and walks away*]

[*Blackout*]

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Children’s Moment – Week 4**

***Nine Words That Changed Everything – Jonah***

**March 27, 2022**

**By Katie Laidlaw**

**Scripture:** **Jonah 1:1-17; Proverbs 3:5-6**

[*The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit or stand around ‘campfire’.*]

**Script:**

[*Looking lost*] Uh, well, hmm… let’s see… I don’t see any more trail markings… I might be a little bit lost. I guess this is what I get for not following the trail markings and trying to go my own way.

Oh, hi friends!

Have any of you ever been disobedient before? [*Allow children to respond*]

There was a man in the Bible who was disobedient to God. God told the man, Jonah, to go to the city of Nineveh to tell the people about Jesus. Nineveh was a terrible place, filled with rebellious people who didn’t know God. Nineveh needed God.

Except, Jonah RAN AWAY from God – he didn’t want to go to Nineveh! Instead, Jonah took a journey on a boat in the opposite direction, to Tarshish.

As Jonah traveled by boat to Tarshish, suddenly a huge storm came. The waves were so large and strong that the boat was going to break into pieces! The ship crew were PANICKING – throwing items overboard to help make the ship lighter. Meanwhile, Jonah was enjoying a nice nap in the bottom of the ship. The ship captain was furious with Jonah: “WAKE UP and pray to your God – maybe he can save us!”

All of the sailors wanted to figure out who was responsible for such a tragic storm. They wanted to draw straws so they could place the blame on someone.

Guess who drew the short straw? [*Allow children to respond*]

The sailors were both terrified and angry; they wanted to know who Jonah was, what he was doing, and why he was traveling.

Eventually, the sailors discovered that Jonah believed in and worshipped God. The sailors knew that God has power over the sea and knew this storm came from His mighty power. The sailors somehow knew that Jonah was running away from God in disobedience.

What happens when we are disobedient? What possible consequences can come from disobedience? [*Allow children to respond*]

Guess what happened next in the story? Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard, as he knew the storm was his fault. He told them that if they got rid of him, they would get rid of the storm. The sailors kept trying to reach the shore, rowing with all their might, but the storm was too strong. They were all crying out to God, begging Him for mercy from the storm.

But the storm didn’t stop. So, the sailors took Jonah and threw him over the side of the ship. Guess what? The storm immediately stopped!

Do you know what happens next in the story? [*Allow children to respond*]

Yeah! Jonah got swallowed by a HUGE fish, where he stayed in the belly of the big fish for 3 days before he was spit out.

Do you think Jonah enjoyed his experience after being disobedient to God? [*Allow children to respond*]

God blesses us when we are obedient to him. God wants our obedience so we can truly experience His love. God wants what is best for us! God has had a plan for each and every one of you since before you were even born. When we’re obedient to God, we follow His perfect plan and experience all the love and blessings He has for us. Will following God in obedience be difficult along the way? Yes! Will we make mistakes? Yes! Can we make the choice to try again and be obedient to God? Absolutely!

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways obey him. Then he will make your paths smooth and straight.”** (NIRV)

Well, I think I really need to start paying attention to the trail markers when I go hiking. Following directions will help me find my way! Let’s try this again.

Pray.

**Main Points:**

* God blesses us when we are obedient to him
* When we’re obedient to God, we follow His perfect plan and experience all the love and great things He has for us
* We can make the choice to walk in obedience and experience God’s love through His plan for us

**Questions:**

* Have you ever been disobedient?
* What happens when we are disobedient?
* What possible consequences can come from disobedience?
* Do you think Jonah enjoyed his experience after being disobedient to God?
* Do you think Jonah learned an important lesson about disobedience?

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Sermon – Week 4**

***Nine Words That Changed Everything – Jonah***

**March 27, 2022**

**By Major Katherine Clausell**

**Scripture:** **Jonah 1:1-17**

**Introduction:**

This week, we continue our journey to the empty cross and the empty grave through the eyes of Jonah, who, in my opinion, is probably the worst prophet. Jonah also ran from his calling, and needed more than a little convincing to undertake the task for which God commissioned him. With four short chapters (just 48 verses), we’ve been able to look at the whole story this morning!

Some people will try to tell you that the book of Jonah is just a made-up “fish story.” Don’t believe them! Jonah is a historical book about a real person. In 2 Kings 14:25, we learn that Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II. Real cities, such as Nineveh, Tarshish (modern-day southern Spain), and Joppa are also mentioned in his book. Even Jesus called Jonah a prophet and referred to his ministry (Matthew 12:39).

Perhaps the biggest struggle people have with this book of the Bible is the idea of someone being swallowed by a gigantic fish and surviving. Actually, sperm whales have been known to swallow large objects, including a fifteen-foot shark. For Jonah to have experienced this isn’t as far-fetched as some think.

**Transition:**

How is Jonah’s story similar to your life today? When did you hear a calling from God that did not make sense to you or made you feel uncomfortable? During today’s Lenten message, you will hear about a prophet of God who had struggles with affirming and recognizing, as recipients of God’s love, grace, and forgiveness, people he considered to be his enemy and the enemies of his people.

1. **Historical Context and Dilemma –**
   1. **Running From God –** In the first verse of the book of Jonah, he is identified as “Amittai’s son.” Amittai is a name that means “to be faithful,” but Jonah’s nature, ironically, is mostly depicted as faithlessness.Jonah was not faithful throughout this book.
      1. Jonah hears God’s calling: *“Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention”* (1:2).
      2. Jonah’s response was one of incredulity. You can almost hear him saying, “You’re sending me to the Assyrians?!” Surely God was mistaken. The Assyrians were brutal people.
      3. Jonah half prayed and half argued with God knowing that God was sending him to bring the Ninevites a message of judgment so that they would repent of their evil deeds.
      4. The Assyrians were bitter enemies of Israel, and Jonah knew the prophecies of Hosea and Amos concerning Israel’s destruction at the hands of the Assyrians.
      5. Jonah wanted no part in helping an enemy that will later destroy his nation.
      6. Instead of obeying God and going northeast to Assyria, Jonah boarded a ship traveling west to Tarshish (1:3).
      7. Nineveh was five hundred miles northeast of Israel. Tarshish (southern Spain) was nearly two thousand miles west of Israel—nearly four times farther away!
      8. Jonah settled back for what he thought was going to be a relaxing ride. He was wrong.
      9. While Jonah had slept, unconcerned, a great storm arose that threatened the safety of the ship and its passengers. The experienced Phoenician seamen had pitched much of the ship’s cargo overboard. Believing the tragic storm was a result of divine judgment against someone on board who had done wrong, the sailors drew lots to see who it might be. All signs pointed to Jonah (1:4-7).
      10. Jonah confessed his wrongdoing and then, told the sailors to throw him overboard (1:9-12).
      11. At first, the sailors refused to do as Jonah suggested, and rowed harder to get back to shore. But eventually they realized they had no other choice but to do as Jonah instructed them to do. The storm instantly stopped. And, just as quickly, a large fish came up out of the water, swallowed Jonah, and carried him away (1:13-17).
      12. While in the stomach of the giant fish, Jonah had time to think—and repent (2:1-9).
      13. God had a job for Jonah to do, and He was serious about it. He wanted His message preached to even the vilest of people—people He apparently cared for.
      14. When Jonah finally understood this, the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry ground (2:10).
      15. Again, the Lord told Jonah, *“You are to go to Nineveh and tell the people what I say to you”* (3:2). This time Jonah obeyed God (3:3).

*(Wind in the Wilderness, pp. 47-49)*

*(Faith Factor OT, pp. 343-345)*

* 1. **A Nine Word Sermon –** Jonah 3:4
     1. Jonah’s time in the fish leads him to a change of heart, so that when God again tells him to go to Nineveh, Jonah does so (Jonah 3:1-3)
     2. God tells Jonah to *“declare against [Tarshish] the proclamation that I am commanding you”* (3:2).
     3. In Jonah 3:4, the prophet walked into Nineveh and dropped a nine-word sermon. Only nine words: *“****Just forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown!”***
     4. As a result of this nine-word sermon, the entire city repented, fasted, mourned, and called upon God. The king repented. Even their animals wore sackcloth as they repented (3:5-9).
     5. Jonah 4:11 tells us that 120,000 people repented on the basis of Jonah’s words.
     6. God saw their repentance and spared the city of Nineveh.
     7. Those nine words changed everything.

**A side note**: Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg address was very short, only about 270 words (less than three minutes). Jonah has Abraham Lincoln beat by a long shot by preaching a nine-word sermon. In the original Hebrew, it’s even shorter, only five words!

*(Wind in the Wilderness, p. 50)*

Jonah’s response to the repentance of the entire city of Nineveh was not what one would expect from a prophet of God. Rather than taking a victory lap, Jonah sulked and proceeded to hold a pity-party. Jonah wanted death and destruction, but instead the Ninevites repented. In terms of results, Jonah was the most successful prophet of all time. And he was angry about the outcome.

* 1. **Grace for one’s enemies –** The story of Jonah is the story of foreigners, enemies even, who respond to God faithfully, and the Israelite prophet who resents God for it. It’s about the startling, scandalous reality that God’s grace really does extend to all people.
     1. God’s grace, God’s plan for salvation, was always intended to be shared with all of creation.
     2. Long before Jesus walked the earth, stories like the repentance of the Ninevites give us a glimpse of God who loves everyone as well as the “chosen” people.
     3. God used a reluctant prophet who really didn’t want to preach to his worst enemies.
     4. Despite Jonah being possibly the worst prophet in the Bible, God still chose to use him and reach many lives.
     5. God was trying to teach Jonah that God’s love encompasses all people, even Jonah’s enemies.

1. **Current Context and Challenge – God’s Love and Justice Encompasses All**

The story of Jonah foreshadows the coming of the Messiah. Jesus came to the earth and offered love and grace to all people, even those that no one believed could deserve it. Jesus’ love by our standards simply doesn’t make sense when we consider that this love is available to even our enemies. We follow a God whose justice, mercy, and love compels us to love even those we might hate the most.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 52)

Many Christians have forgotten that Jesus was a refugee. Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph, had to flee the nation of Israel to the relative safety of Egypt because of state-sanction infanticide. The whole gruesome episode can be found in Matthew 2:13-15. We currently have a global and national refugee crisis. In many parts of the world, including the United States, much to our shame, we tend to lock them up in detention centers for months on end until we establish whether or not they have a good reason for claiming refugee status. Or, we send them back to their won war-torn country.

In The Salvation Army’s International Position Statement on refugees and asylum seekers, we affirm our concern for the many millions of people fleeing or being displaced from their homes and countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution. Many of these have experienced significant grief and trauma, which have potential long-term consequences for their health and well-being. The Salvation Army, in cooperation with other agencies, supports international efforts through the promotion of peace, tolerance, understanding and respect for human life and dignity, to eliminate persecution and displacement. Because God’s loving concern and welcome for the stranger and foreigner (alien) are made quite evident in both the Old and New Testaments, The Salvation Army believes that individuals and nations should respond in a compassionate and humane manner to the plight of displaced persons seeking asylum.

1. **Our Response –** We live in a time and a place where many churches and institutions are known for what or whom they stand *against* rather than what or whom they stand *for*. It is time for us to focus on God who has always stood for all. All means all. You, me, the stranger across the street, the coworker or classmate who gets under your skin, the politician, the lobbyist, and even that family member you struggle with most. Now is the time for truth to be spoken in a prophetic and fearless way. Now is the time when we also need to focus on what we believe in rather than what we do not agree with.

**Conclusion:**

God used a reluctant prophet whose nine-word sermon made a difference to Nineveh and revealed the nature of God. Not only did God show patience and restraint toward Nineveh, but God showed patience to Jonah, too. God engages with him right where he is; even when Jonah sits outside the city to pout, God continues to show Jonah love and mercy and teaches him (and us) about a compassion that embraces even the enemy. *“Yet for my part, can’t I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 people who can’t tell their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”* (Jonah 4:11). This is the wind in Jonah’s wilderness, the affirmation that God has power over all creation and cares for all creation. God delivers. God saves, even the enemy. This is the foreshadowing of God’s actions through Jesus.

The Kingdom is coming. If God can use people like Jonah to change a boat of people and to change the lives of 120,000 people with nine simple words, where might God be calling us? Where is God calling you? Who are the people you are struggling with the most? Where is God calling you to stand prophetically and say that God’s love is greater than this moment and this time?

The kingdom is coming. How will you respond?

(*Wind in the Wilderness,* p. 53)

**[Print in Bulletin]**

**Focus for the Week:**

Consider how you are called to be a prophet through your actions and words. Take time to reflect seriously this week on God’s calling in your life and look for opportunities this week to move into action.

del Rosario, DJ. *Wind in the Wilderness.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.