

Before Old Testament reading



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bpa-jonah/>

Does anyone remember the story of Jonah and the whale? What happened? <Let them respond>

Today's Old Testament reading comes just after the giant fish spewed Jonah up on the shore.

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-person-standing-on-top-of-mountain-2161903/>; photo credit: Quang Nguyen Vinh

Yodelayhee-Yodelayhee-Yodelayhee-hoo!

What is that call? <Let them respond>

Yodels originated in the Swiss Alps as a means of calling cattle and as communication between villages.

What is the expected response to it?

<Let them respond>

How do you respond to it? <Let them respond>

How did God call to Jonah? <Let them respond>

How did Jonah respond to God's call?

<Let them respond>

What about Samuel from last week? <Let them respond>

Or Nathaniel from last week? <Let them respond>

Does God call the same way to everyone?

<Let them respond>

How does God call to us, to you? <Let them respond>

How do you respond to it? <Let them respond>

Does God ever give up on us? <Let them respond>

What did resisting God's call cause for Jonah?

<Let them respond>

What did answering God's call cause for Jonah?

<Let them respond>

What does resisting God's call cause for us?

<Let them respond>

What does answering God's call cause for us?

<Let them respond>

Whatever situation you are in, listen for God and let the Holy Spirit lead you through it. As Jesus said, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Trust God to guide you in doing what is best for you and for the world around you.

Gospel lesson

We hear again the call to follow Jesus.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/wb-four-disciples/>

Mark 1:14-20 (NRSV)

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,

¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen.

¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Cry of My Heart">

TFWS #2165>

Message: A Second Time



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/becoming-the-people-of-god/third-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/third-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Patient Lord who calls us ever closer to You,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may respond with all that we are to Your
grace-filled call. Amen.

We continue "Becoming the People of God" today with
"A Second Time":

"Today is a day to celebrate that, by grace, it is
never too late to join in God's song of good news
and abundant life."



picture from MMMS personal
collection

While on vacation last week, Keven and I took time to
go to Disney World. Advertisements invite you to come
to the "Happiest Place on Earth," neglecting to

mention the small fortune you will need to spend just to step inside. Once there, the most popular attractions are rides for which people will stand in line for hours to experience.

Disney has learned how to manage crowds over the years. Lines for each of their rides are laid out over substantial distances, involving numerous switchbacks; if no one were in line, it would still take 5-10 minutes just to walk the path to get to the ride. Newer attractions have activities built into the waiting areas to keep those in line occupied as they get closer to the ride itself.

The time spent getting to the ride is much longer than the few minutes spent on it, and then that happy experience fades into memory as parkgoers consider what next big excitement to wait in line for.

I think that is representative of much of what we encounter in this mundane world. We see ads promising to make our lives better with things which will not last, we work to afford them, we may even be happy with them for a while, and then feel a need for the next “happy” fix.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/rq-jonah/>

Amidst all this materialism, Jesus calls us to

something better. Much like Nineveh, this world is condemned by sin. But we have hope because of Christ. As the psalmist said, our “hope is from God...Trust in God at all times.”

People need to refocus on God in order to avoid being destroyed by sin. Who do you think the Holy Spirit is calling to tell the people that you know about the Good News? It is unlikely that they will respond like the Ninevites did to someone they do not know.

You do not have to be as eloquent as Paul was to the Corinthians; Jonah’s message was only 5 words in Hebrew, that in 40 days Nineveh would be overturned. He did not mention Nineveh’s sin, how they had to respond, or even God’s name. Yet because that reluctant prophet did as God instructed, the city of his enemies was indeed overturned – not overthrown and destroyed, as Jonah thought, but to the alternate meaning of transformed and changed.

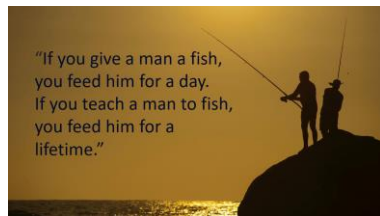
I relate that to the idea of destroying enemies as Emperor Sigismund is reputed to have done: by making them his friends. Jesus taught us to love our enemies; in so doing, they may be overturned to become our friends. We find life by living in love.

But there is an urgency to getting people to turn to God. Our lives on this earth are short and getting shorter with each passing day; we do not know if we

will even be here tomorrow. “The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Jesus is calling us to follow Him, to bring everyone into the nets of His love. Will you answer His call to fish for people, to widen the net, to enlarge the catch for salvation? Whom shall God send?

We need to take time to pray and to listen for God’s call on our lives, and then respond appropriately.



background picture from

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/silhouette-photo-of-two-men-holding-fishing-rods-against-body-of-water-on-hill-319934/>;

photo credit: Oleksandr P

You know the saying: If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” Jesus did not just give the disciples spiritual food and then walk away; He taught them how to obtain the spiritual food by building relationships and community in love.

God is calling us *again* to more than random acts of kindness or just being nice. God is calling us to live grace-filled lives that not only proclaim the kingdom of God, but also teach others about Jesus and how to live in the love of the Holy Spirit as well.

How will you respond to that call today? Amen.