

January 21, 2018

Jonah 3:1 - 4:3

Jonah did not like Nineveh

- too powerful, too “hoity-toity”
- or, maybe they were beneath him
- or, just too inconvenient

Whatever, he didn't want to go

Once on shore though, he probably took  
delight in preaching their downfall

Jonah may even have seen their willingness to  
repent, but thought “falls on rock”

He goes outside city, waiting for destruction

Only to be disappointed, angry – Why?!

“for I knew that you are a gracious God and  
merciful”

“a gracious God and merciful”

Of course he knows, God had just spared him,  
hadn't God?

Jonah knows this, but still sees with his own  
eyes, not God's

Later in story Jonah is angry with God,  
because God destroys plant providing him  
shade

We learn Jonah cares more for plants, than  
people of Nineveh

So, lots to lift up in Jonah story, today I only  
want to examine the “a gracious God and  
merciful” part

Growing our relationship with God happens  
when we see and respond to the world as  
God does – with Grace and Mercy

What we do this month – socks, sweaters,  
coats, and hats – is a good first step

We aren't asking

- why people are living on the edge
- why people don't have jobs
- why people are different
- why people need these things

No, we see people who are

- cold and offer warmth
- hungry and offer food

This is the beginning of living into grace and  
mercy

What we are offering is a non-judgment  
welcome and compassion

It is, however, only a first step  
Whenever and wherever there are people  
homeless, hungry, naked, alone,  
Then the unity of God's creation is broken and  
needs to be fixed  
This unity was broken in Nineveh, yet Jonah  
didn't want to go, maybe he didn't want it  
fixed.  
Today, all around us, all around the world, this  
unity is broken and "a gracious God and  
merciful" calls us – everyday – to be God's  
voice and hands to demand the world repent,  
that it rip off the clothes that divide, and  
recognize the commonality of all creation.  
This is no easy task. Too often I am like Jonah,  
unwilling to reach out to groups I disdain.  
In my case, it is less the homeless than those  
"home-more" – big house, second, third  
house; the rich; the ones who say I have  
mine, I earned mine, get your own.  
Still, to judge, to disdain and to distance is to  
divide – and then the unity is broken  
No grace or mercy on my part

Know, then, that you are called by "a gracious  
God and merciful" to heal the broken unity  
in this world by seeing your commonality  
with all creation  
and with grace and mercy offer all whom you  
encounter kind words and deeds;  
words and deeds of warmth,  
words and deeds that feed the body and the  
soul.  
That is how Nineveh was spared destruction.  
It is our only hope as well.  
May "a gracious God and merciful" give us the  
strength and courage so to act. Amen.