

“The Call”

Paris Avenue 12/1/2024

Readings: Jonah 1, Matthew 25

Good morning brothers and sisters and young people.

Many times in our lives we have been people who have had to shoulder our responsibilities of faith. But sometimes we are also a people that can avoid spreading the truth for fear that there will be negative consequences for us. Today we will start our lesson from the book of Jonah.

Let's read Jonah 1:1-3:

1 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

God gave our brother Jonah the responsibility to go visit the people of Nineveh to teach them the truth. This was a place where sin abounded everywhere. It was so bad that it reached the eyes of God. It was abhorrent to the Father. And God chose Joah to go and warn the people of Nineveh. But what happened? Jonah chose to run far away from God. And Jonah thought that, as he moved from one place to another, that he could escape from the eyes of God leaving God behind. But Jonah forgot that God is everywhere. He sees everything.

When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh to warn them and teach them the word of God, Jonah was overcome with fear. This was because the place where God was sending him was a place he thought would be a danger for both his faith and his life. So Jonah thought if he ran he would save his life. But he forgot that the one who gave him life is the same one who can take it away at any time. This reminded me of the words of the Lord in Matt 16:25 - *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

Sometimes we are also a people that can avoid spreading the truth for fear that there will be negative consequences for us. Sometimes we think it will be especially difficult to share the truth. This can be true both with strangers and with people we know very well. In either case we naturally want to avoid any chance of difficulties or quarrels. But even with people we know, we can fear that our preaching could damage a relationship, or worse, we could lose their friendship.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God has already called us as he called Jonah his servant to do his work. And we have already answered that call by being baptized and confessing that Jesus is the Son of God. That is why we have to proclaim the gospel with power and with one heart. Because that is what the Father has asked us to do, just as he asked Jonah.

When I was reading Hebrews 6 in preparation for this exhortation, it also reminded me of our responsibility to preach the gospel.

The word shows us that we must keep moving so that we can reach perfection. Our journey only ends when Jesus comes back to the Earth for Judgement. And he will judge everyone according to what we did while we were alive. One of those works that he will judge us for is how well we helped warn and teach people the truth of faith in this life. We know this was a critical commandment he gave at the very end of Matthew. Reading from Matthew 28:19-20 - *19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

But if we fail to warn and preach the gospel to others, we will be like the servant of the traveling man who was given one talent. You will remember he was the servant who chose not to multiply the money he was given.

The talent here symbolizes the gospel which was given to us. Our responsibility is to share that same gospel with others so that we can help bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. If we are given five talents and bring five more, or given two and bring two more, Jesus will say *“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”* But if we hide the one talent that we were given and keep it, then Jesus will say *“Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

In this case the Lord will take away what we were given, he will throw us out and we will die forever.

The question for today is - after we have been told about the faith and the truth of God - Are we telling others about the gospel message or are we hiding it, waiting until the coming of Jesus Christ?