

## Lent Devotional March 6, 2019

### SCRIPTURE

#### Jonah 3:1-4:11

<sup>3:1</sup>The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. <sup>6</sup>When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. <sup>8</sup>Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.” <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>4:1</sup>But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. <sup>3</sup>And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” <sup>5</sup>Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup>The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. <sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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?”

### DEVOTIONAL

#### Michael Ondrick / President, PTS Student Association, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Jonah just *knew* what would happen when he went to Nineveh, and so much did he dread his seemingly inevitable fate that he attempted to travel to the ends of the earth to escape God’s plan for him. So too did the Romans know what would happen when they executed Jesus of Nazareth. This usurper, this so-called “King of the Jews”? Flogged, crucified, buried. So too did the chief priests and the scribes know what would happen when they set this course of events in motion. It would be the bloody end of this pretender—just another failed messiah who couldn’t save the Jews from oppression. The women who go to the tomb on the third day to anoint Jesus’ lifeless body do so because a tomb is where the dead lie. A tomb is where rotting corpses are put. Nothing but the bleeding, stinking, mad shadow of Jesus remains. Or so they thought.

In the angels' admonishment of the terrified women at the tomb—"Why do you look for the living, among the dead?" (Luke 24:5)—we might hear something of God's incredulity at the end of Jonah, where God comically reminds the poor sot just how many animals there are in Nineveh. Frankly, the angels' question seems unfair, but it is a reminder to the women—as it is to us—that our God promises release to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and right-sided life in the world to come.

#### **PRAYER**

Lord, whether we find ourselves in the belly of a big fish or staring forlornly at the crucified Christ, we know, O God, that not everything is as it seems. Show us the way of the One who lifts the lowly, brings the powerful to their knees—and robs graves. Amen.