

“Drop What You Are Doing – And Be”

The Rev. Drew Willard
UCC at The Villages, FL
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Jonah 1:1-10

Mark 1:14-20

^{1:1} *The LORD's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son:*

² *“Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it,
for their evil has come to my attention.”*

³ *So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the LORD!*

He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish.’

Jonah 1:1-3

Let us pray... O God,

May we discover that in serving you, we become all that you created us to be.

Amen

Both scripture lessons today are about ‘call’ –

In the case of the fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James and John,
they dropped what they were doing and
answered the call to follow Christ.

In the case of Jonah, he dropped everything and tried to escape his call
by sailing away to Tarshish – another name for Spain,
the farthest corner of the known world at that time...

We have several people in our church who are answering
the call they have been given to serve God:

Monica Peidl seeks to become a commissioned Minister of Music

to broaden and deepen her knowledge of the theology that supports the music,
and to help her reach higher in her interpretation of that music.

Louise Tallman has been cleared to go before the Conference Committee

on Church & Ministry as she seeks dual-standing as an ABC and UCC minister;

Today we will offer her a call to serve here as a Minister of Visitation

to provide additional help to me in providing pastoral care to you

and through her gifts & experience, enhance our pastoral ministry;

She also seeks to lay the groundwork for a network of support

for the chaplains in the Florida Conference.

Margarita Romo has already achieved so much in providing advocacy

for the farmworker community of Calle de Milagros and Resurrection House;

She seeks to be recognized as a licensed UCC minister through us.

Steven Mears is just starting out on his call to be an ordained UCC minister,

but like Margarita, that path is contingent on developing a relationship

with us as a congregation – perhaps as missionaries,

for they are as much a bridge to us as we are to them.

Add John Allen to that list – he is already a UCC minister who answered the call

when our Regional Minister Sarah Lund asked him to be Conference Treasurer.

Willard, p. 2

To follow your call... Just what does that mean? How do you know you have one?

Every Sunday, we say, 'Wherever you are on life's journey' –
for Monica, Louise, Margarita, Steven, John, and myself,
that has meant the journey to serve God
through commissioned, licensed, or ordained ministry.

How about you? Do you have a call?

Joseph Campbell – a scholar of comparative mythology,
puts it simply as 'follow your bliss' – follow what you love.

Perhaps you have heard these quotes:

"To be is to do" – according to Socrates.

"To do is to be" – Jean-Paul Sartre.

And "Do be do be do" – is the wisdom of Frank Sinatra.

<http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/09/16/do-be-do/>

Like Sinatra, we would like to '*do it our way*',
but most people are not be able to make their living doing what they want.

Still, if it is in you to do, you have to find a way.

Even more important than the "doing", though, is "being" –

to be yourself, to be true to yourself, to be who God created you to be.

When you know how important that is to you,

then you will want that for somebody else, too.

You will want others to realize their potential, too –

and that is how the Beloved Community can happen.

The more you give of yourself, the more you become who you were meant to be.

But how often do we run from that call? What are we afraid of?

Perhaps we are only afraid we won't live up to our own expectations

of what we can do – when all we really have to do is be ourselves.

I love the story of Jonah. It's about journeys and transformations

that begin with God wanting him to go preach to the Assyrians of Nineveh,
bitter enemies of Israel.

Though Jonah was to proclaim their impending doom,

he was convinced God would still spare the Assyrians, so he ran away!

This is also a spirit adventure – the journey that leads from the head to the heart
as God teaches Jonah not to define himself by his enemies,

but to find part of himself in those enemies – to find empathy.

God uses all of Creation to get Jonah's attention, by 'appointing' or 'calling'

the wind, sea, and sun, the great fish, the leafy plant, and the worm,

ultimately to get Jonah to care about a world

bigger than Israel's conflict with Assyria.

Willard, p. 3

It is troubling to hear about young people seeking to sacrifice their lives
for something they think is bigger than themselves –
often as pawns for gang activity or extremism.

The difference between that and true service to God is that
the sacrifice leads you to self-discovery and self-fulfillment,
and the creation of a better world.

When we help each other become who we can be,
that elusive Beloved Community shows up.

Christ called those first disciples to follow them
and they learned not only from his words, but also by his example.

Something happened long ago for those disciples who were scattered
after Jesus' arrest and crucifixion,

but then found the courage themselves to face death
as they answered the call as apostles to proclaim God's word.

When you are living out who you are – when you allow yourself to be yourself,
isn't it true that even when you are in a hard struggle against tough opposition,
it can be the occasion of joy, win or lose?

Two Sundays ago, Jancie Uribe greeted me at the end of the service
to tell me she had seen gay couples standing in line
at a government building waiting to be married.

There was a single protestor with a sign who was shouting at them,
and Jancie walked up to him and said,
"You're wrong! I belong to a church that is open and affirming."

That's ministry!

To help others to be who they are, to be all who they can become.

And Jancie found something about herself in the process – courage.

She found the courage to stick up for somebody else, just like Jesus,
just like his disciples who followed him, and I believe like Jonah, too.

The more we are imitations of Jesus, to answer the call to follow his example,
the more each of us can become the person we hoped we would be –
the more we are truly ourselves.

How often do we run from that call? What are we afraid of?

Perhaps it is only the fear of not living up to our own expectations –
when all we really have to do is just be ourselves.

Amen

Our lesson today from Jonah 1:1-10, tells of Jonah's call by God to confront Nineveh and how he tried to avoid it...

^{1:1} The LORD's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son:

² "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention."

³ So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the LORD!

He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the LORD.

⁴ But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces.

⁵ The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter. Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep.

⁶ The ship's officer came and said to him, "How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won't perish."

⁷ Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, "Come on, let's cast lots so that we might learn who is to blame for this evil that's happening to us."

They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

⁸ So they said to him, "Tell us, since you're the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What's your country and of what people are you?"

⁹ He said to them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land."

¹⁰ Then the men were terrified and said to him, "What have you done?"

(The men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the LORD, because he had told them.)

Mark 1:14-20

14:1 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee,
preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;
repent, and believe in the gospel.”

16 And passing along by the Sea of Galilee,

he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea;
for they were fishermen.

17 And Jesus said to them,

“Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.”

18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

19 And going on a little farther,

saw James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother,
who were in their boat mending the nets.

20 And immediately he called them;

and they left their father Zeb'edee in the boat with the hired servants,
and followed him.