

Faith Life Weekly: 2/22/08 R.F.

Reflection:

It was the story of Jonah that we were telling to the children. You should have seen their eyes. Children have a vast deposit of "Holy Imagination". Do you remember how it was when you were "but a child"? You know Jesus said to adults, "turn and become like children again".

We were telling the story of Jonah, talking about the Big Fish in the story. You should have seen their eyes. I had seen this one other time when we talked about the sea monsters that are spoken of in the book of Psalms. I asked them, "How big was the fish?" Their arms couldn't stretch quite far enough. I think they said something like "Ginormous". One little tyke told me that it was "dark and scary", and there was this determined, wrinkled up, and shuddering expression on his frame.

The children got it.

Who would want to be in the belly of a fish anyway? Even the fish got tired of old complaining Jonah. God tired of Jonah's rebelliousness to his call. So the story is: the big fish spit Jonah out on the shore. I can't imagine what he smelled like, but the children can. Their noses got all wrinkly.

I have been getting quite a charge out of those Jimmy Dean Sausage commercials. I see them early in the day on the weather channel as I check the weather before I go to work. One of the commercials has a 4 year old, you know, going through all of those rhythmic questions: "How come?" "Why?" "How many?". You know the course. And finally the little girl just wrinkles up her nose and sniffs. She is satisfied with the answers that her dad, the sun, has given. You can tell, though, that she is anxious for the very next exchange with the sun.

So their noses got all wrinkly.

We talked about responding in a positive way to God's call. But more importantly, we talked about Jesus' resurrection. Some students of the Bible feel as though Jonah's time in the belly of the big fish is like the day after Jesus' death on the cross, and when He was placed in the tomb. Can you imagine what Jesus was going through during the time between Good Friday and Easter? I believe the children can. Just ask them. So we covered ourselves with a blanket and pretended that we were in the belly of a fish. We prayed for protection and security in God's Love. Yes, Jesus protected us by his act of Salvation. Jesus rose from the grave in three days. Jesus wasn't spit out upon a beach somewhere, but He arose and He still lives in hearts today.

You know - the interesting thing with the story of Jonah is that he goes and tells the Ninivites about God. And to his surprise they turn toward God.

What surprises you anymore? Anything? What about your imagination, your Holy imagination? Can you imagine God being with you know in your crawl space of fear, discomfort, and dismay? God is there you know. All you have to do is pray. God can turn any situation around for good. That's the promise.

As we approach the end of Lent in the church, and the Easter of our Lord, give some thought to this.

Wrinkle your nose if you have to. Ask all the hard questions. Spell it out. It's dark and scary in there. Man, you can even shudder if you need to. That's okay in God's sight.

Because let me tell you something. Easter means there is still some imagination, some surprise left, and you better be ready for it.

One more thing... Are you ready for some adventure? Is anybody going sailing this week? Are any of you ready for some heavy fishing? Let me know.

We finished up and the children looked at me, and said, "That was awesome". I thought awesome was a big word for such little children. But their Holy Imagination knew. They said it. They knew it. "Awesome!"

R. F.

SONG:

Casting Crowns has this great Song entitled, "Who Am I". This is the question that many of us ask. But I find the answers pleasing in Jesus Christ.

(Listen to a sample of this song, and watch a video at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CT7x3VnrgbA>

The video is awesome!)

Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth

Would care to know my name

Would care to feel my hurt

Who am I, that the bright an morning star

Would choose to light the way

For my ever wandering heart

Not because of who I am
But because of what you've done
Not because of what I've done
But because of who you are

I am a flower quickly fading
Here today and gone tomorrow
A wave tossed in the ocean
A vapor in the wind
Still you hear me when I'm calling
Lord, you catch me when I'm falling
And you've told me who I am
I am yours, I am yours

Who am I, that the eyes that see my sin
Would look on me with love and watch me rise again
Who am I, that the voice that calmed the sea
Would call out through the rain
And calm the storm in me

I am yours
Whom shall I fear
Whom shall I fear
'Cause I am yours
I am yours

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Journaling:

Here are some questions to ponder this week while you consider the story of Jonah:

- Why are you on this earth? For what were you born?
- What is the deepest hole you've ever been in?
- Who is inviting you into some new adventure? Why are you hesitating?
- When have you not grabbed hold of an opportunity – and later wished you had?
- Remember when you thought you knew it all? What happened?

(From Dancing Down the Hallway, Fryer and Ressmeyer, Augsburg, 2001)

- Make a list of all the things you believe God wants you to do but you haven't done.
- What stands in the way of your doing these things for God?

(From Grow For It Journal, Lynn and Lynn, Youth Specialties, Zondervan, 1994)

Prayer:

"God you are awesome. To be honest, there are times when we feel that we are in the belly of a fish, call it our own rebelliousness or even our wild side that has gotten us there. Do we hear you calling? Help us to heed your voice. And when we are finally out of that belly of a fish, when we are finally spit out on the seashore of our life, help us respond to your promised moment of resurrection. Oh, and God, that is awesome! Thanks for the adventure. Awesome! Amen!"