

Ash Wednesday 2020

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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[0 : 0 0] tonight's scripture reading is from Matthew chapter 12 verses 38 to 41 then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him teacher we want to see a sign from you he answered he answered a wicked and adulterous generation asked for a sign but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth the men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and now something greater than Jonah is here this is the word of the Lord thank you Adrian the sign of Jonah Jonah was a prophet he was a reluctant prophet actually and he was asked by God to go to Nineveh and tell the Ninevites that God was about to destroy the city and so being completely faithful to God he got in a ship and went the exact opposite direction he ended up in a storm and ended up in the belly of a fish a big fish we like to think a whale and while he was praying to God in there eventually got spit up on the shore and decided maybe I ought to go to Nineveh and do what God said so he went to Nineveh and he proclaimed that God was going to destroy the city and it would be totally and entirely ruined but the people did something strange they repented they actually started praying to God and asked God to forgive them for their wickedness and God decided not to destroy the city Jonah was not happy he said God you've really embarrassed me you made me look like a fool I said it was going to be destroyed and now it's not and he went up on a hilltop and he said that's the story of Jonah what does that have to do with God and with Jesus today we begin Lent a season of introspection and considering what our life is with God and how we're supposed to live and so tonight I normally on Wednesday night do a Bible study so this is going to be a cross between a Bible study and a sermon as we're going to take a meditation a little time to look at Psalm 139 you have searched me Lord and you know me you know when I sit and when I rise you perceive my thoughts from afar you discern my going out and my lying down you are familiar with all my ways before a word is on my tongue you Lord know it completely you hem me in behind and before and you lay your hand upon me such knowledge is too wonderful for me too lofty for me to attain coming to you now from the largest studio ever constructed it's the Truman Show yeah good morning good morning oh and in case I don't see you good afternoon good evening and good night no scripts no cue cards morning Spencer how's it going what if you were watched every moment of your life it's almost kind of creepy isn't it he knows you when you're sleeping he sees when you're awake hello he knows if you've been bad or good oh my goodness he knows what you're thinking before you speak it

God is ahead of us God is behind us God is behind us God's hand is upon us the ways of God and knowing God are like nothing else because God to us is different the way in than the way in which we have a relationship with other people God knows us in our in most being the stuff the person closest to you doesn't know God knows where can I go from your spirit where can I flee from your presence if I go up to the heavens you are there if I make my bed in the depths you are there if I rise on the wings of the dawn if I settle on the far side of the sea even there your hand will guide me your right hand will hold me fast if I say surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me even the darkness will not be dark to you the night will shine like the day for darkness is as light to you you can't run from God you can't hide from God even when you don't want God around he's there

Jonah had a little different theology he was kind of thinking God is a God stuck like in the Middle East so if you got in a boat and he went to spin God wouldn't be able to find him have you ever tried to hide from God did you ever like think that maybe you could kind of get away from him he got I got some stuff to do and you probably won't like it so why did you go look at China for a while okay right but he's there even in the darkness in the book of John it says people like the darkness who are doing evil things because they can hide but they don't hide from God Jonah got on a boat traveled across the sea and all of a sudden there's this giant storm and all the people on the boat are trying to figure out why there's a storm and Jonah says it's me

I'm like what he said he said yeah just toss me over and the storm will stop what we're not tossing you over dude what are you wacko we're not doing it so they struggled with the storm and he said you're not gonna get any rest until you toss me over and so they said God forgive us poop they tossed Jonah over and the sea went calm and a big fish swallowed Jonah and it says that Jonah was in the belly of that fish for how many days oh my gosh three days in a belly of a fish oh think about the claustrophobia you ever have that dream where you're like stuck in some little tunnel or something you're stuck in this fish belly it's all slimy and smelly I mean you know what fish smelly I mean you know what fish smell like on the outside it isn't any better on the inside and so Jonah after three days three days he finally says you know what I do I'll pray to God I'll pray to God because even though I've been trying to run away from God I know God even knows I'm there in the belly of the whale in your darkest times in your biggest struggles even when you don't want to have anything to do with God even when you're ready to chuck it all God is with you yea though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death down in those dark shadowy valleys God is still with us so he prayed to God and God heard him and God heard him and he said that Jonah was vomited up on the shore I want you to think about that there's Jonah laying in a puddle of fish vomit what do I do now what do I do now for you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother's womb I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made your works are wonderful I know that full well my frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place when I was woven together in the depths of the earth your eyes saw my unformed body all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be you were God knew you this isn't the book of Jeremiah before I formed you in the womb I knew you and I called you according to my purpose Jonah don't you know I have a purpose you're supposed to be what are you doing in Nineveh what are you doing in a puddle of fish vomit get up I wonder if he cleaned himself off he'd have been a wild looking prophet if he went with fish vomit all over him right get up and do what you were meant to do what I created you to do before time God has a plan for us before we're even born he sees us before we're even created in the womb he ordains it says away for us God knows us God knows us and God knows you better than you know you if you can imagine a such a thing God knows you better than you know you because we sometimes want to deny stuff about ourselves God knows us God knows us

God knows us and God knows us and God knows us and God knows us and God knows you better than you know you if you can imagine a such a thing God knows you better than you know you God knows you because we sometimes want to deny stuff about ourselves God knows us and so we come to Lent this time of year when the Holy Spirit helps us to understand our lives who we're supposed to be ashes to ashes dust to dust we came from nothing and in some ways the world sees that we go to that but if God knew us before we were even born don't you believe that God will hold you after we leave this place and so we take Lent as a time to try to reconnect with that God who formed us in our very most beginning before we were even alive how precious to me are your thoughts God how vast is the sum of them were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand when I awake I am still with you how precious are God's thoughts what God has planned for us and what God can reveal to us is far more important than what we can find out about now

[12 : 15] I have to be careful because a lot of our people that come to Wednesday night Bible study are here tonight and I don't want them to get the idea they shouldn't come to Bible study next week studying the Bible is a very good thing learning and growing about our faith is an excellent thing to do but sometimes we just simply need to connect to the God who made us directly and let God through his Holy Spirit pour his revelation into us I found I've learned a lot more from God in prayer this is the truth than even from reading this book which is such a wonderful book God loves us and he has a purpose for us he has an intention for us if we can discern what it is Jonah went to Nineveh he was reluctant he didn't want to go but when he got there he got into it you're all going to be toast you're going down the whole city is burning you're done he was actually I think kind of enjoying it and the people were like no

I think he liked that even more and then they did something totally bizarre something Jonah completely did not expect 200,000 people went from being people who didn't believe in God to being people who decided to follow God and he's like what?

you weren't supposed to take me seriously I mean the whole getting toasted and burned and all that stuff yes but you're not supposed to actually turn to God what are you doing?

that wasn't the plan I said you're going to be messed up God what are you doing to me? come on he's what would be called the most reluctant prophet in the Bible and at the same time he's the greatest evangelist that ever lived in one effort he saved 200,000 people I don't even think if you had it up all my sermons I preached to 200,000 people wow changed an entire city the greatest city in the world in that day and he's miserable he's miserable why?

well because there's some people we really don't want to be happy if only you God would slay the wicked away from me you who are bloodthirsty they speak of you with evil intent your adversaries misuse your name do I not hate those who hate you Lord and abhor those who are in rebellion against you I have nothing but hatred for them I count them my enemies isn't it easier if we can blame somebody else for all the problems in the world it's the Russians you know they do everything wrong those darn Russians you can do what you want with that I know some of you are going he didn't say that name did he?

[15 : 43] it's fascinating it truly is that we want to find brokenness in somebody else if we could turn the red blue in the blue red everything would be fine we could get rid of those people you know the ones I'm talking about Jesus said don't worry about the speck in somebody else's eye when you got a log in your own Jonah went up on a mountaintop and watched the city you know why he was up there on the mountaintop?

he was hoping God would change his mind and toast the city he really was God they're the bad people what is the matter with you God?

you've embarrassed me what the heck? get them! you know God can be kind of funny he caused a little vine to grow up and shade Jonah from the sun Jonah liked the little vine and then God caused a worm to eat the vine now that tells you how long this guy was up here waiting for the city to be destroyed and the vine died away and he was very upset and God says so let me get this straight you're upset because this little vine that gave you shade isn't there anymore but you're okay about 200,000 people would die maybe the problem isn't with them Jonah maybe the problem isn't with them Pendleton maybe the problem isn't with them people brothers and sisters maybe we need to start looking at our own world isn't that what Lent is?

turning inward to discern what we are who we are and what we should be search me God and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting search me test my thoughts see what you think of me Lord find out what's broken in me take it away and fix me because that's what Lent is really about a time to examine our lives consider who we are and who we've been and to pray to God that he will turn us into what we always should have been all along this evening as part of our service we are we are turning to some of the liturgies of the church but some of them are old liturgies you might even know some of these you might not know some of them but they're intended to remind us of who we are whose we are and what we can be so we're going to turn to a prayer of confession that some of you may remember shall we pray together merciful God we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart we have failed to be an obedient church we have not done your will we have broken your law we have rebelled against your love we have not loved our neighbors we have not heard the cry of the needy forgive us we pray free us for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord amen this is the good news

God loved us while we were still sinners this proves God's love for you and for me in the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven glory to God amen I like Jonah I know I'm not supposed to because he didn't do what God said to do because he kind of had a nasty attitude towards the people he was preaching to because he kind of was off target in so many ways and I guess it's just because I like somebody who's kind of messed up a little bit too along the way it reminds me of myself and I just feel a little better knowing that those people are in the Bible but that doesn't mean we want to make our lives that way the whole purpose of Lent is to examine our lives and to see where maybe we can move a little bit forward a little closer to what Jesus had in mind so go and live as God intended be blessed by a God that can love you even when you don't do it right be blessed by a God that loves you and knew you before you were born and will carry you to after you're no longer here go in the peace of God and may God be with you always

[21 : 00] Amen No No No No No Amen.

Amen.