

The book of Jonah has many delightful ironies. One is that God's prophet Jonah always knew what God should do in a particular situation, while those Jonah considered pagans (the ship captain and King of Nineveh) recognized they could not know what God would do (1:14; 3:9). Apart from answering Jonah's prayer for deliverance from the belly of the fish, God does *not* do what Jonah wants God to do in the rest of the story. But the pagans receive everything they ask from God, after first acknowledging they don't know what God may do.

Who knows what the Holy Spirit may do in our lives, or congregational life? The Jonah story invites us to be open, vulnerable and humble, and to rely on God's grace. It reassures us that God is kind and merciful, very patient, always showing love, and does not like to punish anyone, not even foreigners (4:2). It also reassures us that God saves us from external dangers, and even from ourselves!

We can be confident about God's love, mercy and salvation! However, the ways in which God does this will often catch us by surprise. By saving Israel's national enemy, God expressed love, mercy and salvation to Israel. They had one less national enemy! But in Jonah's ironic "Assyrian reasoning," (see Brian's May 8 sermon), annihilation was the only way to eliminate a national enemy. It's one thing to hold that worldview. It's another thing, however, to continue holding on to it *after* God has miraculously saved you and your nation!

We rarely look to sailors for spiritual insight, but let's do precisely that as we bathe this transitional time in prayer, and open ourselves to receive God's amazing grace in unanticipated ways.

Looking ahead:

May 15: 9:30am Jonah 1 *Jonah R Us?*

May 22: 9:30am Jonah 2 *Whalehouse Religion*

June 19: 11:00am Session #2 Transitional period proposal presented

July 10: 11:00am Session #3 TBD

Projected in town schedule: May 13-17; 22-24; May 29-June 1

-Gary Martin, Transitional Pastor

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