

Message

Sunday, 21 January 2024

**“JESUS CALLS YOU TO SHOW THE WAY FOR HIS PEOPLE”**

**Pastor Hans Peethala**

Melvin heard the story of Jonah and said "Well, how do you believe he survived all that time inside the whale?" The lady said, "I don't really know. I guess when I get to heaven, I will ask him." "What if he isn't in heaven?" Melvin asked sarcastically. The lady replied, "Then you can ask him."

This coming week is a special day for all of us because on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan we celebrate Australian day. It is more special for me because it's the day I arrived in Australia. The 26<sup>th</sup> of January is Australia Day and Indian republic day. **I thank God for bringing me here and making this my home with lovely people like each of you.** There is much for which to give thanks to God for giving us this beautiful land that gives freedom and a peaceful life. At the same time, if we take time to pray for our nation, we will need to plead with God to put right many things that are wrong in this country. **The country has become so secular, materialistic, self-serving, and disobedient to the will of God. God has become more often an option in life for many in this country.**

In such times in the past, when people have turned away from God, God has raised up prophets to call them to repentance. **One such prophet long ago was Jonah, who is usually remembered for a story about what happened to him when God called him to take God's message to the great sinful city of Nineveh.** Jonah tried to run away from his calling, and he got into a ship that was going elsewhere. God was persistent in his calling and God journeyed with Jonah as he sailed on the ship, as he was deep in the water inside the whale and until he reached the shore and went to Nineveh. Jonah was the first submariner. God never gives up on calling His children. He is persistent.

**THEME: “JESUS CALLS YOU TO SHOW THE WAY FOR HIS PEOPLE”**

Jonah was written in reaction to the second Temple's oppression of other nations, specifically the religious establishment's banning of marriage with foreigners and subsequent attempts to exile foreign wives. **The story is meant to raise the question in listener's minds, 'Why does God care about Nineveh, those foreigners?' This story is not only about the transformation of Nineveh; it's also about the conversion of Jonah and the attempt at converting the leaders of that day to greater tolerance and compassion.** Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, now known as Iraq. **Why is God bothered about a Muslim country? Jesus says he came for the whole world.**

Jonah didn't know what he needed but God knew, and he knows what we need. God does not give any of us what we deserve, but what we need. Like Jesus, Jonah is also sent by God to proclaim his salvation, to call human beings to repentance. Like Jesus, Jonah also experiences human weakness, the temptation to flee, to avoid bearing the weight of God's will be offered to him. Jonah was not prepared to go to Nineveh, but God was persistent in calling Jonah. Jonah went back to his job as a prophet and learned that when the word of God is spoken, even unlikely people like those in Nineveh can turn to God. He proclaimed the words of John and Jesus **repent and believe for the kingdom of God is near and only forty days remain before doom arrives.** Much to Jonah's annoyance, God was not too proud to change His mind and forgive even those he has threatened to destroy. The good news is that God forgives His children. We live in a country which is similar to Nineveh. **If you think Australia needs a prophet like Jonah to call us to repentance and renewal, you may be right. God has called each one of us through our baptism to be a messenger like Jonah and bring people to God.** We might also be like Jonah when the pastor or a church member asks you to do something you think I don't have the calling to do it. **But if we let the story of**

**Jonah touch us, if we plumb the depths of our own hearts, we will find Jonah there within us that part of us that judges and condemns, that desires revenge rather than justice and peace.**

**Dear friends! You cannot choose your calling because your calling chooses you.** In Mark's Gospel 1:14-20 Mark offers the core of Jesus' proclamation, **"God's kingdom has drawn near: repent and believe this is the good news!"** Jesus finds the disciples trying to mend their nets and catch fish and He said to them **"Come, follow me,"** and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him."

Simon, Andrew, James, and John left their nets and all the work they were doing and followed Jesus. **The disciples did not choose their calling, but their calling chose them. Jesus chose them. The disciples had no training or the skills and qualification, but Jesus chose them because they were children of God. Each one of us is called by Jesus to come to him and receive His grace. Jesus is persistent in calling us** and tells us that he makes us perfect disciples through his grace.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** 1906-1945 *The Cost of Discipleship*, once said **"The Sacred Call is transformative. It is an invitation to our souls, a mysterious voice reverberating within, a tug on our hearts that can neither be ignored nor denied. It contains, by definition, the purest message and promise of essential freedom. It touches us at the centre of our awareness. When such a call occurs, and we hear it – really hear it – our shift to higher consciousness is assured"**.

**God is persistent in calling us. Willimon a biblical scholar said Jesus does not work alone but joins hands with ordinary people to do extraordinary things. We cannot spell church without U.**

Paul reminds us in **1 Corinthians 7:29-31** that we as God's children are called to order our lives by the realities of God's kingdom, not by the standards and practices of "this world" that are "passing away." God reminds us not to worry and be slaves of sadness or anxieties or worldly pleasures but rejoice for we are set free from all the worldly complications through the calling we have received from Jesus. The Gospel sets us free. The Holy Spirit enables us to look beyond our worldly experiences and focus on God's kingdom. **Amen**