

Partisan Theology: Three Days in Hell (pt. 2)

Jonah 3--4

November 15, 2020

Peter Hiatt

Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/partisan-theology-three-days-in-hell-part-2/>

Transcript document prepared by: Heather Eades (eades.heather@gmail.com).

This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

Vladimir neglected to attend church for a time. It wasn't that he was an unbeliever but because he was sixteen and found a few other things more interesting.

One day, he overheard his father asking the parish priest what he should do about it. Now I'm sure the priest wanted all the boys to attend his church. He overheard the priest say, "This is what you should do about it--Beat him. You should beat him and beat him and beat him." And at that, Vladimir Lenin tore the cross from his neck, made a vow, and began to beat the church... and now hundreds of millions lie dead.ⁱ

But where was that battle fought? ...In universities between scholars? ...On battlefields between empires and nations? Or in the heart of a teenage boy who desperately needed to believe, "God is Love"?

About eighty years ago in South Africa, a little boy was walking down a sidewalk next to his mom, holding her hand. A man was approaching them on the sidewalk from the other direction. He was white, and they were black. Desmond had been in similar situations before and knew the drill. But on this day, the man stepped aside, smiled, and tipped his hat as if to say, "You go first, and I'll follow."

Surprised at what had just happened, Desmond looked up at his Mom and said, "Why was that man so nice to you?"

"Desmond, that man is a minister of the gospel," she answered. "People like that are kind to everyone." And it was at that moment, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu remembers saying to himself then and there, "That's what I want to be when I grow up: a minister of the Gospel."ⁱⁱ

About fifty years ago, Desmond Tutu sat at my table, drank from my cup in Littleton, Colorado. I barely remember it; my dad invited him over to our house for dinner and he came. My mom had to remind me—it was the day our wiener dog had puppies and the puppies died. I don't remember a Nobel Prize-winning archbishop who changed the world eating dinner at our house. But I think I do remember an African man who was nice, had something to do with Jesus, and felt sorry about the puppies.

So, who changes the world? Hitler, Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or some unknown man who, without thinking, stepped aside, smiled tipped his hat, and let a poor black woman and her little boy go first eighty years ago in South Africa?

Prayer

Let's pray: "Father, would you send your Word to overturn our hearts, to be implanted within us, within the broken dirt and muck of our lives? Would you help us preach—it's even in his name-- in Jesus's name that we can ask this. Amen."

Message

In the sermon before last, we talked about the fact that arguing over politicians is like arguing over the babysitter—it matters, but it doesn't matter in the way we are constantly being tempted to think that it matters.ⁱⁱⁱ

Last week we talked about Jonah, the partisan prophet, who went to hell and then preached the Word. He was partisan toward Israel and against Assyria, with good reason—at least according to our reckoning.

[Image: slide on screen showing historic art wall panel from Assyria]

This is a wall panel from the Palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh. It is a depiction of Assyrians skinning Jews... alive.

Jonah was a partisan prophet, who engaged in partisan politics. I suppose all politics in this world are at least a little bit partisan.

This is how it works... in case you don't know:

Step 1: You define your "polis."

That's simply the Greek word for city. ("Polis" is the perfect name for a politician) Your Polis could be your city, your state, your country, maybe even your race—like the Aryan race or the Jewish race. It could be your class, like the Proletariat or Bourgeoisie. It could be a political party like Republican or Democrat. It's your group.

Step 2: You make it partisan by pitting it against another group and then trying to gain power over that other group.

You define your group as best or first, and try to take power from the other group by making it last or worst. You exalt your group by humbling the other group.

And, of course, you'll want to use your knowledge of good and evil to do this, to justify your group and accuse the other group—that's the way. And so, you'll be tempted to not only use your knowledge of the truth but actually twist the truth to *make a way*. And you'll be tempted to use life—voters and soldiers—to get your way.

If your polis is first, then Truth and Life can't be first. If your polis is first, it's a good chance you'll make something else last.

If we actually believe, “America first,” aren’t we making something else “last”? Maybe we mean “first at something.” So, what is that “something”? Make America first... at what?

Democrats want to make Democrats first... and Republicans last. Republicans want to make Republicans first.... and Democrats last.

If you are thoroughly partisan, you will try to win at all cost: You’ll use Truth and Life, thinking that’s *the Way*, and then find yourself lost... Why? You’ll be lost because you just crucified the Truth, and the Life, to serve your polis. That will leave you dead, lost, and eventually alone, because Love isn’t beating your neighbor; Love is serving your neighbor—that’s *the Way*.

I think this is maybe the saddest commentary on the state of the American psyche right now: the fact that we’re all utterly stressed about two seats in a Senate comprised of 100 seats—*stressed* about whether there will be one more vote for the Democrats or one more vote for the Republicans. See, we all assume that Senators will not seriously consider people’s lives, listen to truths, and then make complicated thoughtful decisions... We assume that they’ll just vote for the Blue Donkey or the Red Elephant.

That’s utterly tragic. *Tragic* because it means that we make decisions like we root for a football team. And it means that our “team”—our *polis*—really has no substance, no meaning. It’s tragic because there are good liberal arguments and good conservative arguments, and we need to hear all those arguments to make good decisions and find the way.

There are times when it makes sense to be cautious, conservative, and wear a mask; for instance, if you don’t, everyone might get sick and die. And there are times when it makes sense to take chances, be liberal, and not practice social distancing, because too much social distancing, and there will be no economy, no food, and no babies.

And you’ll notice that my example is confusing, because liberals are acting rather conservative on this issue, and conservatives are acting rather liberal; and those words don’t mean much anymore, except red team or blue team. I think that’s because we’ve politicized everything in America, including truth; and without truth there can be no meaning.^{iv}

You know “left” and “right” really have no meaning in and of themselves.^v According to Michael Hannah, who recently wrote about this in the E-news, that all started with a tennis court somewhere in France during the French Revolution.

And think about it: If you always go left... or always go right.... it only means that you’re going in circles, will just get dizzy, and never find the way. To get somewhere, you sometimes go left and sometimes go right. And if you listen to correction from each side, you might even go straight—straight on to your destination.

People on the left worry about the right, and they have good reason; we could spiral to the right and end up like the fascists in Nazi Germany. And people on the right worry about the left and have good reason; we could spiral to the left and end up like the communists under Stalin.

It’s important to remember that every political entity will attempt to use the Way, the Truth, and the Life—that is, the Word of Love—to exalt itself and humiliate its neighbor.^{vi} They all want God on their team, as long as he’s blue or red, as long as he’s dead and can’t argue.

Both Hitler and Stalin not only supported but funded the institutional church, as long as it supported their party.^{vii} In both instances, the institutional church gained power, while it crucified the Truth, renounced its own Life, and lost the Way.^{viii}

“Collaboration with power,” wrote Jacque Ellul, “is always ruinous for the church.”^{ix}

Well, partisan politics may have its place—it’s how the children attempt to pick their own babysitter; it has its place... if we remember what it is. But if “partisan politics” becomes “partisan theology,” if we begin to say, “Dad loves some, and he doesn’t love others,” or “Dad loves our group but he doesn’t love your group,” or “God’s for us and not for them,” I suspect we’ll just end up in hell... just like Jonah.

And now, if you’re paying attention, you may have been asking:

“Isn’t God partisan? Isn’t he partial to some and not others?”

“Doesn’t he pick some and reject others? ...Even if he picks those that pick him and reject those that reject him?”

“And talk about partisan politics, didn’t God pick Israel to be first and others to be last?”

Well... God did pick Israel. And that’s what makes the story of Jonah so fascinating—not the fish, but the fascinating, terrible, and entirely wonderful, judgment of God, that is “the Word of God.”

By way of review:

- The walking, talking Word of God with a face came to Jonah—Jonah who is a prophet of Israel and the representation of Israel.
- And that Word said to Jonah, “Go to Nineveh for their evil has come before my face. Go to Nineveh and preach.”
- And what will Jonah preach? Well, *the Word of God* of course—the Word that is “*a hammer and a fire*,” and will judge the Assyrians.
- You would think Jonah would love to announce, “*We’re first; your last, and here’s a little holy fire to prove it.*”

Well, Jonah hears the Word; perhaps he also saw his face.

[Image: Still image on screen from the film “Passion of the Christ.”]

We conjectured that it must’ve looked something like this: The face of the Word of the Lord, body broken and blood shed. Jonah sees that God is Judge, and his Judgment is Grace.

He hears the Word, and then runs from the face of that Word. (Deuteronomy 28: 15— that’s a sin punishable by death... v. 26 “your dead body will be food for the beasts.”)

You may remember that God once said to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy... [what if that includes the Ninevites and everyone you hate?] I will have mercy... and no one can see my face and live.*”^x

Well, Jonah must have seen the face, for he fled from the face, went down to Joppa, and took a ship bound for the open sea. When the sea would not cease it’s raging, he was cast into the abyss and was swallowed by a giant fish—a *nuna* that looks like *Nina* of the Ninevites. He descended into “the belly of Sheol,” the belly of the beast; he descended into death.

It's ironic: The measure Jonah would give is the measure Jonah gets. The judgment that Jonah would pronounce is the judgment that Jonah receives. It's ironic: He's all about Old Israel in the Revelation; I think that's the imitation Christ—the Beast from the Land. And he's swallowed by the Beast from the Sea... and ends up in Sheol.

Some say that I don't believe in hell, and yet I talk about hell more than any pastor I know. I want to say, (but don't know how to say): *"Not only do I believe in hell, I'm trying to say that you may go to hell, for it seems to be just where you would like some others to be going. If you go, you can't stay there forever without end, for Jesus is the End. But as long as you hate the End, you'll hide in hell, in the belly of space and time. Jesus is the End; Jesus is Salvation; Jesus is the Judgment of the Lord. Salvation does not belong to you. Salvation belongs to the Lord. And if you don't like it... you can go to hell."*

Now pay attention: In the book of Acts, where the Gospel goes to the nations, "hell" is never mentioned, neither *Hades* nor *Gehenna*. But in the Gospels, Jesus issues warnings about hell over and over again... to Israel.

In Matthew 8:10, Jesus admires the faith of a Roman Centurion and then says, "Truly, I tell you,...many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom"—[that's Israel]—"will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

*"Sons of the Kingdom"...*that's Israel, that's Jonah, and maybe that's us! *U.S.-us.*

Partisan prophets love to point out that the U.S. has a special relationship to Israel, the modern nation state of Israel. (Whether *that* Israel is the same as the true Israel is a topic of heated debate.) But just about every theologian worth their salt will argue that we've all been grafted into Israel—and that the 12 disciples were the start of a new Israel. The Church is Israel.

So, if we are Israel, we better listen to the warnings given to Israel. If the U.S. is "exceptional" as Israel is exceptional, then we better pay exceptional attention to the story of Jonah. We better preach the Word to the nations, so we don't end up like Jonah.

Jonah goes to Hell... and Solomon writes, "There is no work, thought, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going." No thought, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol.

In other words: No one *believes* in hell; that's what makes it Hell. Hell is *not* believing the Word of Love—Our God is Love. No one prays to God in Hell. But on the third day in hell, there is a miracle.

Jonah 2:2 (King James Version) **"Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice,"** says Jonah.

"Salvation—ye-shoo-ah—belongs to the Lord." The Lord is Salvation: *Yeshua*.

- Jonah speaks the Word, for the Word had descended into hell with Jonah.
- Jonah speaks the Word, and the beast cannot stomach the Word.
- Jonah speaks the Word, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.
- Jonah dies with the Word, and Jonah rises with the Word.
- The Beast literally vomits Jonah and the Word up onto the Dry Land.^{xi}

And that's where we pick up the story this week. Chapter 3:1:

...the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it [“preach to it”] the message that I tell you.” ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. ⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown [haphak: overturned, changed, or repented]!”

So, get the picture? Jonah didn’t trust the Word of God and was three days in the belly of Nina. Now, Jonah spends three days in Nineveh, preaching the Word.

⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God... they trusted his Word.

They trusted the Word, and it overturned their city—their *polis*. They believed the Word. *Why?* ...Now this is a huge question, especially in light of the rest of the story, so we’ll return to it in a few minutes.

They “believed God.” Verse 6, the king of Nineveh gets up off of his throne, takes off his robes, and puts on sackcloth—he repents. And he orders every person and every beast to wear sackcloth—and repent.

3:10: When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster [literally, “relented of the evil”] that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

4 ¹But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, [literally translated: “it was exceedingly evil to Jonah”] and he was angry [*charah*: kindled, hot].

The fact that God wouldn’t do evil was exceedingly evil to Jonah, and in the light of God’s Word...he began to burn. Jonah hates the Grace of God; it burns him.

Jonah explains that this is why he ran from God’s Word in the first place: God is “Gracious, Merciful, abounding in Steadfast Love, and relenting from evil.”

Jonah ran from the Word of Love, trying to hide in the depths of the sea... and that’s the outer darkness—that’s hades; that’s hell. And now, he is burned by the Word of Love—and that’s *Gehenna*, the edge of God’s Polis, the edge of His City—that’s his judgment of eternal fire, the Word.

⁴ And the Lord said, “Do you do well [*yatab*: good] to be angry?”
“Is doing good not good to you, Jonah?”

⁵ Jonah went out of the city...
Just imagine: it must’ve been like a party in the city—that’s what people do when they experience grace.

⁵ Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city...
Just like Adam and Eve went out: to the east of Eden.

⁵ Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth [*sukkah*: tabernacle] for himself there.

Just like the booths the Israelites made in the wilderness on their journey.

He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. ⁶ Now the Lord God appointed a plant [a vine] and made it come up over Jonah [over the booth made of twigs], that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort [literally: “his evil”]. So, Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

And ironically, he already appears to be dead, so to join the party in the city would be the death of death, and that’s life.

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” ¹⁰ And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh [“have compassion on Nineveh”], that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle [or “many animals”]?”

And that’s where the book ends: With Jonah weeping and gnashing his teeth in outer darkness, just outside a city full of happy people.

It ends just where the story of the Prodigal Son ends: with the older brother weeping and gnashing his teeth in outer darkness, while his father who is with him begs him to come in and join the party with his little brother.

It ends just where the parable of the Vineyard ends: With all the early workers having judged themselves out of the Kingdom because they resent the Mercy of the Master on those who came late and are in the Kingdom now.

It ends just where the Bible ends, where the Revelation ends, with those who love falsehood,^{xii} weeping and gnashing their teeth in the darkness of this age, just outside a city. An eternal city, filled with *every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them...*

- a city into which the kings of the earth bring their glory...
- a city in which everyone is happy, death is no more, and all things are new...
- a city whose gates are always open by day and it’s never night there.

The book ends where I am and Peter Hiatt is... I believe, but I need help with my unbelief.

I’ve been baptized—died with Christ and risen with Christ.

I’ve experienced Grace, but I struggle to be Gracious.

I know the Good, but I struggle to be the Good.

I’m partial to myself and partisan to my group.

And you see, God is not partisan—he is no respecter of persons.

The book ends where I end and begin, at the edge of time and eternity, at the judgment of God, at the edge of a garden, just east of Eden, where the word of God sharper than any two edged sword cuts to the division of soul and spirit... discerning the thoughts and intentions of my heart.

Now, check out this last line. It gets lost in translation, but translated literally, it should take your breath away.

God says, “[Jonah] should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 12 times 10,000...”

12—that’s a hugely significant number for Israel isn’t it? 12 times ten thousand (“thousand” is the biggest denomination in the New Testament, *Chilio* in Greek, *Mille*, as in “millennium,” in Latin. This word, “*ribbow*,” is often translated, “ten thousand” or “myriad,” as in *Young’s Literal* translation, “twelve myriad.”)^{xiii}

“Jonah, should I not have compassion on more than twelve ten thousand *Adam* [common singular noun]... twelve ten thousand *Adam* who have not known their right hand from their left—let alone good from evil—and also all the animals?” Wow... imagine if we actually believed the Bible.

Right here, we’re like East of Eden, and the Word of God is talking to Israel about Adam, as if Adam has been broken into 12,000 pieces because Adam did not know good from evil, so did not trust that the Word of God is Good.

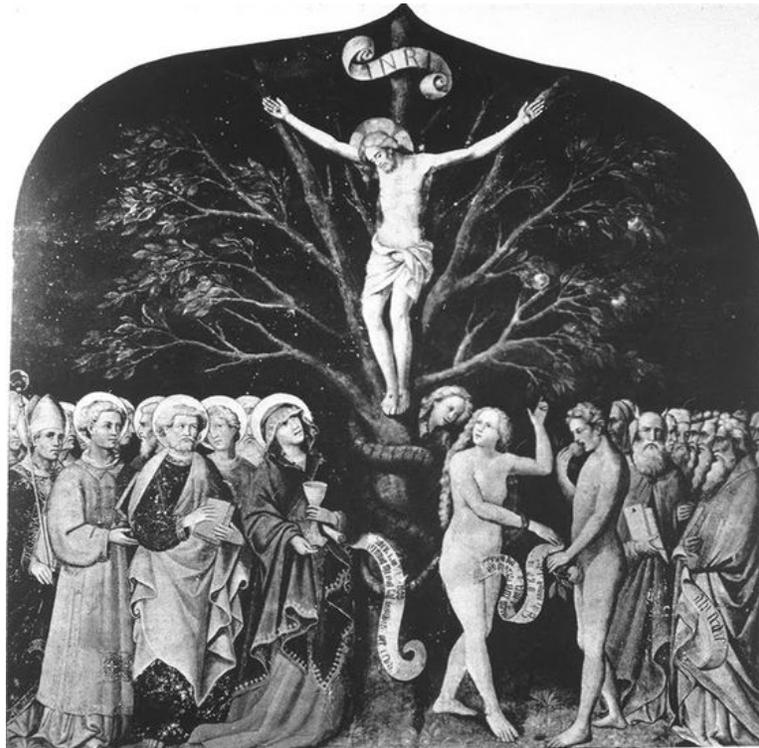


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

See? We’re back here at the edge of this.

Now I know that this is more than we can process in a few minutes, or all of time, but for now just notice that God refers to all of the Ninevites as “Adam.”^{xiv}

It’s Hebrew convention to use the word “Adam” in this way; scholars will point that out.^{xv} But maybe we should ask, “Is it Hebrew convention by accident, or is it Hebrew convention for a reason, maybe even the reason—the logos?”

When we studied Ecclesiastes, we realized it was for a reason.^{xvi} And when we get to the New Testament, St. Paul writing in Greek reverts to Hebrew in critical situations as if to say, “I’m using this word for a reason!”

He does it in Romans 5, and 1 Corinthians 15, where he writes, “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive... thus it is written ‘the first Adam became a living being [soul], the last [eschatos] Adam became a life giving spirit, [life giving breath, life giving word].”

So, what is the Word of the Lord to Jonah? Isn’t it something like this?

Jonah, the Ninevites are Adam, and you are Adam, and I am Adam— the last Adam, the son of Adam, the son of Man—who gives himself up for all, that all might give themselves up for me, for we are one, just as I and the Father are One.

We are truly one, eternally one. But as long as you desire hell, I will remain in hell with you.

- *It was me that came to you and asked you to preach.*
- *It was me that caused the storm.*
- *It was me that constrained Nina, the beast, to gulp you down.*
- *It was me that descended into the belly of that beast with you.*
- *It was me that called on our Abba as we suffered together in Hell.*
- *It was me that led you here, for it’s me that suffers in the belly of every Ninevite.*
- *It’s me that suffers in the womb of Adam; I am the son of Adam, son of man.*
- *It’s me that upholds all things in heaven and on earth, under the earth and in the sea...*

And I do it all that you might learn to Love, which is Eternal Life—I came to die with you in time, that you might live life in me for all eternity.

Jonah, the Kingdom of God is not “partisan;” it is an infinite number of things, and yet they’re all bound together as one by me, the Word of God, the rhythm of the dance, the Logic of Love. The first are last and the last are first, the exalted are humbled and the humbled are exalted, all win for all choose to lose, and everyone is happy—that’s the Logic of Love; that’s Grace.

It’s not that some are bad and need to be destroyed, and others are good and need to be rewarded. You needed to learn the difference between Good and evil, which is the difference between “I am” and “I am not.” You needed to know what is and what is not, so you could choose to be who you are, and who we are, in freedom and constant joy.

It’s not that some of you chose evil and some of you chose Good. It’s that all of you chose evil in order that all of you could see the Good who constantly chooses you—I am the Good, I am the Life, and you are my Body.

It's by dying with me and rising with me that you join the dance. I am the way, I am the truth, I am the Life, I am the logic of Love. I am the Word of I am; everything that's anything is my choice. So how could I be "partisan"?^{xvii}

Jonah, I chose you to help me invite others to the dance... and to teach you to dance in the process.

Israel, I chose you to be first... at choosing to be last. Now do you understand: that's the first step in the great dance: You must lose your life to find it.

In Genesis 12, God just speaks to one of the sons of Adam, named Abram: "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you, all the families, (all the nations, that's every polis) will be blessed."

So, it will involve blessing and cursing and cursing and blessing, exalting and humbling, humbling and exalting; but in this way and through his chosen people, God will call everyone to the dance. He is the Dance, and we are his image: the image of Love.

Well, Israel did not respond to their call and descended into the abyss, but just like Jonah they will be saved. And much of the Institutional Church has not responded to the call, and I suspect many have descended into the abyss, but just like Jonah we will be saved... when we stop trusting ourselves for salvation. We're saved, like Jonah, by preaching the Word: "*Yeshua: Salvation belongs to the Lord.*"

And now, you may have wondered, "*What exactly did Jonah say?*" All we know is that he said, "*Forty days and you'll be overturned.*" And, in fact, they were. But we don't know exactly what he said. Maybe it doesn't really matter.^{xviii}

Listen to Jesus: "... As Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation... The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching [*kerygma*: proclamation] of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."^{xix}

I suspect the proclamation of Jonah wasn't what he said...(I'm sure Nineveh was full of prophets saying all sorts of things.) It wasn't what he said but who he was, he was the sign and the substance of Grace.

He was lost, but now he was found.

He was blind, but now he was at least beginning to see.

He had died for he deserved to die and chose to die, but he had been raised because God chose him to live and be a testimony: Everything is Grace.

Like me, he struggled to believe the Gospel, and yet he was the Gospel.

So, he didn't have to say it with his lips, because he was it with his being. Jonah was the poster boy for Amazing Grace.

I doubt that he could explain the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was more like the *presence* of the Way, the Truth, and the Life in an earthen, stubborn, grumpy vessel—just a seed of faith in a jar of clay. And that was enough... for a time.

- Jonah was saved, kind of, and for a time...
- And Nineveh was saved, kind of, and for a time...
- But Jonah would still die. And in a generation, Nineveh and the Assyrians would forget about the Word of God and utterly obliterate Israel.
- Jonah was a sign pointing to something greater.

Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter when Peter blurted out, “You’re the Christ, the son of the living God!”?

He said, “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah”—[that’s always confused commentators, for it appears that Simon Peter’s dad wasn’t named Jonah, but John.]^{xx} But Jesus says, “Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”^{xxi}

That’s amazing! But then, Jesus would soon say, “*Get behind me Satan.*”

Peter wasn’t perfect. Peter would even deny Jesus, for as Jesus reveals, Satan had asked to sift Peter like wheat. But after Peter dies with Jesus, Peter rises with Jesus, and is filled with his Spirit, and is called to preach, like Jonah.

In Acts 10, he’s praying in Joppa...(That’s where Jonah took the boat to the open sea.) And like Jonah, he receives the call, but not to go to Nineveh, but to go to someplace far, far, far worse—the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, in the city of Caesar. (It was a Roman Centurion that crucified Jesus, his best friend-- and it was all done in the name of Caesar.)

Peter receives the call, but unlike Jonah, Peter answers the call... He goes to Caesarea and listens to Cornelius—he drinks from his cup and sits at his table (He’s even told to do so in an amazing vision.) Then he preaches saying, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,” and he testifies to Jesus. He is the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy in a jar of clay.

- And that’s how Jesus conquered the Empire of Rome—quite a formidable *polis*.
- And that’s why that pastor tipped his hat and stepped off the sidewalk to make way for a black lady and her little boy in South Africa.
- And that’s why Apartheid is now history, and why anything good that’s *ever* happened, actually did happen.
- That’s why Desmond Tutu was nice, and why I wanted to be a pastor like my dad was a pastor, and why you’re listening to me right now. Not because someone used knowledge of the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to argue you into the Kingdom.^{xxii} But because someone was the presence, the face of the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and loved you into the Kingdom.

Not because someone used knowledge of the Good to pass legislation enforcing you to be good. But because someone was the incarnation of the Good in a world that is not good, and you fell in love with the Good, like a light shining in the darkness...and only later did you ask for an explanation.

You know if we really fell in love with the Word of Love, who is our Father, we wouldn’t even need a babysitter.^{xxiii} We wouldn’t need legislation, judiciaries, and executives to execute the law. We would all gladly lose, and everyone would win; we would all dance. It would be “free-market communism.” And that’s a non-stop party.

And even if only some of us began to dance and party, we could at least have a decent conversation about politics.

So, if you voted for Trump, God is calling you to go to the house of someone that voted for Biden, sit at their table, drink from their cup, and be the testimony of Jesus. That's how God chooses to change the world.

And if you voted for Biden, God is calling you to go to the house of someone that voted for Trump, sit at their table, drink from their cup, and be the testimony of Jesus because your last name isn't Hiatt, Smith, or Jones—it's Bar-Jonah, and that's how the kingdom comes.

I believe God is calling you—and by “you,” I mean “the Sanctuary,” Republican or Democrat, Conservative or Liberal. I believe he's calling you to testify, for your theology—theo logos, God Word—is not partisan; and so the Word on your tongue can deliver people from hell, and even politics.

Communion

And so, the walking, talking, Word with a face...took bread and broke it. (Peter breaks the communion bread.) The eschatos “Adam” took bread and broke it, saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat.” And in the same way, he took the cup, saying, “This is the eternal covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you.” ...and we know who was sitting at that table when he said that.

And so, we invite you—he calls you to come to his table. Take a piece of the eschatos Adam—think about it: that's like one man who's been broken into like twelve thousand pieces—you take it, and you eat it like so. (Peter eats the bread.) Let it descend into the abyss and give birth to the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Believe the Gospel, and you become the Gospel. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Benediction

And so, Lord Jesus, we confess that you're the first. You're the firstborn of all creation. You're the Chosen One, who chose to make himself last and least, and to descend into all of us to teach us the dance. You're the first step, the last step—you're the only step in the dance. You're the manifestation of love, and we are your body. And so, I pray that you would help us to believe it. We know that there's no way we will ever arrive at the Kingdom and be disappointed by your Goodness. You're always better than we thought. Your love, Lord Jesus, is deeper than we know, and your Spirit is everywhere always working its wonders of mercy. So we worship you, our King, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Endnotes

- Richard Wurmbrand, *Reaching Toward the Heights*, April 2

ii One of the most interesting stories about courtesy that I know comes from the life of Bishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Prize winner. As a boy he had learned the effects apartheid had upon the ways in which black people were treated by white people. Indignities were to be expected, and humiliation was felt in most encounters with "superiors."

But one day as the young Tutu was walking down the street with his mother, they confronted a white Anglican clergyman. Unexpectedly, the Anglican priest stepped aside in a deferring manner and tipped his hat at the boy's mother, showing her uncommon courtesy.

Young Tutu was very surprised at the courtesy that had been shown to his mother. He turned to her and asked, "Why was that white man so nice to you?"

"That man is a minister of the gospel," his mother answered. "People like that are courteous to everyone."

Bishop Tutu remembers saying to himself there and then that he wanted to be an Anglican Priest.

- Tony Campolo, *Everything You've Heard is Wrong*, pp. 75-76.

iii Babysitters come and go, and once the Will of our Father comes to reign in the Sanctuary of the soul, we won't need babysitters at all.

If the communists come and command us to share all our possessions, we'll just smile and say I already have.

And if the fascists come and say I'm taking away all your rights, we'll just smile and say I didn't know I had any, and if you take my life, I've already given it.

And if you destroy this body—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—I'll get a new one.

iv So, it doesn't make much sense that liberals are all about wearing masks and conservatives are all about liberating us from masks, or conservatives are all about big government when it comes to drug legislation and liberals about small government or no government regarding the same issue.

It doesn't make sense, except that each party will latch on to any cause that might help them win, and cause the other party to lose.

If you always agree with the democrats, or always agree with the republicans, stop, and ask yourself "why?"

If you're worshipping a blue donkey or red elephant ...you may have just crucified the truth, renounced the life, and lost your way.

v That all started with a ridiculous incident involving a tennis court during the French Revolution. Michael Hannah wrote a fascinating little article about this for our E-news just a few weeks ago.

vi By the cross . . . Christ abolished the slavery which, as a result of sin, lay over our existence as a menace and an accusation. On the cross He "disarmed" the Powers, "made a public example of them and thereby triumphed over them." . . . He made a public example of them. It is precisely in the crucifixion that the true nature of the Powers has come to light. Previously they were accepted as the most basic and ultimate realities, as the gods of the world. Never had it been perceived, nor could it have been perceived, that this belief was founded on deception. . . . The Pharisees, personifying piety, crucified Him in the name of piety. Pilate, representing Roman justice and law, shows what these are worth when called upon to do justice to the Truth Himself. Obviously, "none of the rulers of this age," who let themselves be worshipped as divinities, understood God's wisdom, "for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:8). Now they are unmasked as false gods by their encounter with Very God; they are made a public spectacle. Thus Christ has "triumphed over them." The unmasking is actually already their defeat.

-Hendrik Berkhof

It is again clear. . . that the divine state is quite incompatible not merely with the wicked totalitarian state but with every conceivable human regime. . . .

In all these dimensions the world is concretely violated by God Himself in the fact that the man Jesus came into it and is now within it. . . .

We do not know God at all if we do not know Him as the One who is absolutely opposed to our whole world which has fallen away from Him and is therefore self-estranged; as the Judge of our world; as the One whose will is that it should be totally changed and renewed.

- Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, p. 109-110

vii During the late '39-'45 war, in the darkest days of Russia when the German army was within a few miles of both Leningrad and Moscow, Stalin did a most extraordinary thing. You might have expected that as a convinced Marxist he would have had readings from *Das Kapital* on the Soviet radio in order to stiffen up the sinews and summon up the blood of this fellow countrymen. But he didn't do that, for the name of Marx was unmentioned in those dark days. What he did

do was a characteristic Stalinist thing, he fetched the patriarch and one or two other prelates from the labour camp where they were languishing and brought them to the Kremlin and set them up in business again. In other words, he reestablished for the time being the Russian Orthodox Church. It's one of those very significant incidents that tends to get forgotten. I wonder what it must have been like in the camp when the poor old patriarch was told that Stalin wanted to set him up again. The order to get all his vestments and things would have come as quite a shock to him. But that is exactly what happened, because Stalin knew that to get the Russian people to fight to the end with their backs to the wall he needed something more than Marxist materialism.

-Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 15

viii The first nation to separate Christianity from government"—that's the power to legislate, judicate, and enforce obedience, that's what the blue Donkey and red Elephant are all about. "The first nation to separate Christianity from government produced perhaps the most religious nation on earth," wrote historian Gary Wills

-Gary Wills quote from Philip Yancey, "What's So Amazing About Grace?", Chapter 17, pg. 235

ix Ellul points out this lesson, one that the church around the world needs to remember: "Collaboration with power, whether Communist or not, is always ruinous for the church. If the church exists, if it is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it must always stand erect as a counter-power to political power."

-Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, p. 196.

x And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."- Exodus 33:19-20, see also Romans 9:15

xi The "Dry Land" must be a reference to a new creation and new birth. Jonah was in the "belly of Sheol," literally, "the Womb of Sheol." That means hell is not the end; but it gives birth to the end, which is a new beginning.

xii Revelation 22:15

xiii I was wrong in the sermon at this point. I do think "thousand" may be the largest denomination in Scripture, but this word, *ribbow*, means "myriad, i.e., the number ten thousand, a number greater than one hundred times one hundred" according to the Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains

xiv We have come *to* Christ as believers and Christians, because we had already come *from* Christ, so that there was nothing else for us to do but believe in Him....What is Christian is secretly but fundamentally identical with what is universally human. Nothing in true human nature can ever be alien or irrelevant to the Christian; nothing in true human nature can ever attack or surpass or annul the objective reality of the Christian's union with Christ....So it is Christ that reveals the true nature of man. Man's nature in Adam is not, as is usually assumed, his true and original nature; it is only truly human at all in so far as it reflects and corresponds to essential human nature as it is found in Christ.

- Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam* (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 111-112

"The Lord showed his own son and Adam as but one man. The **strength** and goodness which we have come from Jesus Christ; the **weakness** and the blindness which we have come from Adam, and these two were represented in the servant."

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*. p.121

xv Adam is often translated "man," and clearly means "mankind," but "Adam" singular although modified by plural pronouns.

xvi Particularly in Ecclesiastes "Adam" appears with the article "ha"—"ha Adam, the Adam." This is also true of many other places in the Old Testament. It gets translated as "man," and now to be politically correct, "people," or "humanity," and this is all a tragedy, for I think Solomon is saying, "I'm talking about the one man Adam, and all of us, because we are the same." What wonderful news, that the Word of God has also become Adam, the ultimate (eschatos) Adam. As Isaiah prophesies, "he is numbered with the transgressors, the rebel-ers, the sinners."

xvii There are those who talk about God's cause, and about wanting to serve that cause. This is all very fine, but how, exactly, is this to be interpreted? The common view thinks that God has a cause in the human sense of the word, that he is some kind of advocate, interested in having his cause win and therefore eager to help the person who would serve his cause, and so forth. If we follow this line of thinking God becomes a minor character who arrives at the embarrassing dilemma of needing human beings.

No, no! God has no cause, is no advocate in this sense. For God everything is infinitely nothing. Any second he wills it, everything, including all opposition to his cause, becomes nothing. Wanting to serve God's cause can never mean the same thing as come to his aid. No, to serve God's cause is to face examination.

- Kierkegaard, *Provocations* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), p. 43

^{xviii} Toyohiko Kagawa (the Japanese Christian who spent his life working with and for the poor) was speaking at Princeton (the capitol of the intellect, words). When he finished his talk, one student said to another, "He didn't say much, did he?" A woman sitting nearby leaned over and murmured, "When you're hanging on a cross, you don't have to say anything."

^{xix} Luke 11:30-32, also Matthew 12:40-41

^{xx} John 1:42, 21:15-17

^{xxi} Matthew 16:17

^{xxii} In short, to demonstrate the existence of someone who already exists is the most shameless assault. It is an attempt to make him ludicrous. The trouble is that one does not even suspect this, that in dead seriousness one even regards it as a godly undertaking. How could it occur to anyone to demonstrate that God exists unless one has already allowed himself to ignore him?

A king's existence is demonstrated by way of subjection and submissiveness. Do you want to try and demonstrate that the king exists? Will you do so by offering a string of proofs, a series of arguments? No. If you are serious, you will demonstrate the king's existence by your submission, by the way you live. And so it is with demonstrating God's existence. It is accomplished not by proofs but by worship. Any other way is but a thinker's pious bungling.

- Kierkegaard, *Provocations* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), p. 75-76

^{xxiii} A Jesuit once wrote a note to Father Arrupe, his superior general, asking him about the relative value of communism, socialism, and capitalism. Father Arrupe gave him a lovely reply. He said, "A system is about as good or as bad as the people who use it." People with golden hearts would make capitalism or communism or socialism work beautifully.

- Anthony De Mello, *Awareness* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 151

"We have no government armed in power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our constitution was made only for moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."

- John Adams