

MCC REFRIGERATOR CARD

5-3-15

God's Infuriating Grace for ALL by Jeff Simpson

Jonah and 1 John 4

Jonah is considered a satire by many biblical scholars, in that it makes fun of the whole prophecy thing. It really is a funny story when you think about it. Jonah's people were part of ancient Israel and Israel had this longtime enemy called Assyria. Jonah thought the best thing that could happen would be for God to destroy Assyria, but that doesn't mean Jonah wanted to be one to tell them. Instead he goes the other direction. Jonah takes off in a boat with some handsome sailors. The hunky sailors (I'm ad-libbing with the hunky thing) realize Jonah is the problem and they throw him overboard and just before our poor guy drowns, he is swallowed by a big fish where he is given, as my favorite minister Nadia Bolz-Weber calls it, "a gastronomic time out" for 3 days. So then Jonah gets all sentimental and says those Psalmic things we heard in our reading and he gets vomited up by our dear Moby. Then he is instructed to go back to Ninevah AGAIN! And guess what... it worked! They repented and God did not destroy them. Jonah is NOT happy. NOPE! Instead he finds this little hill and goes up on the hilltop and pouts like a big ole baby. He's unhappy because God killed his little shade plant! But he was perfectly fine to have had God kill thousands of Ninevites because Jonah didn't like them! Instead... God showed them grace. God's INFURIATING GRACE! How dare God treat those sinners well!!! To me the fish represents something that CONSUMES Jonah (not literally) and prevents him from ministering to God's people. So what consumes us! Maybe, in making choices for whom we think is deserving of God's Grace, we are consumed by self-righteousness. Our good news reading today says in verse 21, "The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also." Hmm... Let's pause here for a moment. We MUST love who? Each other? Ninevah was located in the modern day city of Mosul, Iraq. This summer, the militant group ISIS destroyed a Mosque in Mosul. A Mosque! And who do you think was presumed to be buried under that Mosque? That mosque was traditionally understood to be the burial site of none other than, Jonah. I mean Isis, our own "underserving of God's grace enemy" destroyed the burial site of our prophet who thought the enemy was undeserving of God's grace! Where does it end? It Doesn't! HATE consumes and consumes! And who really decides who deserves God's grace? Yes folks. God does, not us! Hard as it is... Isis is entitled to God's infuriating grace too! That's tough, isn't it? Whew! That's a whale of a proposition! In AA, we learn that "Resentments are the number one offender." It is our own resentments toward those who have harmed us that presents us from loving one another and making our own determination that, 'No! I won't share the love of God with those people!' I was beaten severely by a man in 1988 who left me with permanent nerve damage and broken bones in my face. *I certainly had times where I was angry with God but I knew as long as I had some faith and trust and I learned to forgive, that someday, I would be able to smile on my own again. Thursday, I underwent surgery and while I am still healing, this is the first time in years I am able to lift my own lip and begin the start of a smile. I HEALED when I learned to let the whale of resentment regurgitate me!* "We love because he first loved us."