

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: Holy God, we confess this morning that we often resist when You call upon us to act. We confess that there are so many other voices and demands, that Your call becomes just one among many to choose from. But we know that You are the one true God, and that You have called us to speak and to act in Your Name. Help us to respond to the voice that is calling us, the voice that is compelling us to go where You would have us go, and to do what You would have us do. Help us to follow You, wherever You might lead us. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

How many times can you think of when your parents, a teacher, or a coach told you to do something that you *really* didn't want to do? Did you try to get out of it? What kinds of things did you do, to try to avoid doing what you didn't want to do? Did you end up doing it anyway, even if you were mad about it? There are a lot of stories in the Bible about God asking people to do things for Him that they really didn't want to do. Jonah didn't want to go where God told him to go, and ran the other direction! Moses didn't want to tell Pharaoh to free the Hebrew slaves, and gave God lots of reasons why he was the wrong guy. Sometimes, God puts it on our hearts to do things that we know will be hard, and that we don't want to do, or maybe even are afraid to do. But God promises to be there with us, to help us to do His will even when it's hard! We can always trust God's Word!

MONDAY 5.22.23

Genesis 3:1-9

This week, we are beginning a new sermon series based on the Old Testament story of Jonah. The story begins with Jonah's attempt to flee from the clear call that God has placed on his life. But Jonah is far from the only person in the Scriptural narrative who attempts to flee from God. In fact, part of the fallen nature of humanity seems to be the strong inclination every one of us has to go our own way, rather than respond to God and go His way. Thus, the story of the fall of Adam and Eve that we read in Genesis today seems like the right place to begin to review the biblical presentation of this theme. Having been told by God not to eat of the fruit of the tree "in the middle of the garden," Eve succumbed to the serpent's temptation to do so, and then Adam succumbed to Eve's. As a result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the LORD God in the middle of the garden's trees." Years later, Jonah would try to flee from God to the city of Tarshish; but he was just repeating the attempt of Adam and Eve to flee from God deeper into the garden of Eden. It just seems to be what humans do when they are unwilling to be obedient to God's plans and expectations for their lives.

- When have you tried to flee from God? What expectations of God are you actively rebelling against?

TUESDAY 5.23.23

Exodus 3:1-4:13

The call of God upon Moses could not be missed. Not many of us get a burning bush, with the voice of God speaking to us out of it! But even with God's explicit call upon Moses to "bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt," Moses tried to get out of it in multiple ways. "I don't have the qualifications." "I don't even know your name!" "Nobody will believe You sent me." "I'm not an eloquent speaker." And, finally, "Please, send someone else!" In His patience, each time, God had a response ready for Moses that was meant to alleviate his anxiety. As we will see in coming weeks in the story of Jonah, it's not always easy to escape the call of God. God is persistent. But even though we know that ultimately, God's will prevailed and Moses did in fact lead the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, Moses could have walked away at any time. What Moses discovered, though, is that the call of God is sometimes something that it is virtually impossible to say "no" to. As with Moses, the voice of God upon us is so strong, and so insistent, that we know that if we don't say "yes," that voice will only get louder and stronger. Even when every part of us wants to flee, we may find ourselves, instead, saying "yes."

- When have you said "yes" to God, but reluctantly? Why were you reluctant? What happened after your "yes"?

WEDNESDAY 5.24.23

1 Kings 19:1-18

In the stories leading up to today's reading, the prophet Elijah had been obedient to the call of God, and defeated the prophets of the Canaanite god, Baal, in a contest on Mount Carmel. In the time of Elijah, Ahab was the king of Israel, but Ahab's wife Jezebel was an advocate for the worship of the storm god known as Baal. When the prophets of Baal who were leading Israel astray were put to death, Jezebel vowed revenge upon Elijah. Even though Elijah had been obedient to God's call, he was terrified by Jezebel's threats. Fleeing Israel, the place of his ministry, Elijah ended up in a confrontation with God on Mount Horeb—another name for Mount Sinai, the very place where God had given Moses the Ten Commandments and all the laws of the Torah. Twice God asks Elijah, "Why are you here?," and twice Elijah reminds God of the very real threats on his life if he continues to be obedient to God's call on his life. But God is not done with Elijah. He gives Elijah several new tasks ... including anointing a successor to his own prophetic ministry (Elisha), as well as a successor to King Ahab (Jehu, son of Nimshi). For his lifelong obedience, God will bring Elijah to His side on chariots of fire (see 2 Kings 2).

- Has following God's call on your life ever implied a serious threat to you? Did you try to escape? What happened then?

THURSDAY 5.25.23

Jeremiah 20:1-18

On Tuesday, we looked at how Moses was ultimately unable to escape God's call on his life, and yesterday, we saw that Elijah, too, ran away in fear when God's call implied serious threats to his life. Today, we read the words of the prophet Jeremiah, whose God-given task it was to inform the kings of Judah that their nation was going to be devastated by Babylonian armies. Jeremiah hates his calling—he is laughed at, mocked, and curses the day he was born if this is what God intends for his life's work to be. Yet, Jeremiah says, "His Word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." Like Moses, Jeremiah cannot escape God's call on his life even when he wants to. And like Elijah, Jeremiah must carry out his calling amid the reality of very real threats from his countrymen. Jeremiah will end up arrested, sentenced to death, released, arrested again, thrown into a cistern, and left to die. About 200 years earlier, Jonah had tried to run from the task of preaching repentance to Israel's enemies. Now, Jeremiah wishes he could die rather than tell his fellow citizens that their enemies will certainly destroy them. The message God asks his prophets to speak is rarely what the prophet, or the masses, want to hear.

- Has God ever asked you to do something you dread?

FRIDAY 5.26.23

Mark 14:32-50

Perhaps there is no more vivid example of our deep temptation to run from God’s call, especially when the going gets tough, than the behavior of Jesus’ disciples in the aftermath of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mark reports, “And all His disciples left Him and ran away.” Jesus had called the disciples to follow Him in His work, and the disciples grew to recognize that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” By the time of His arrest, they knew that they were participating in God’s work, through Jesus, of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God into the kingdoms of the world. They had gone out into that world time and time again fulfilling the mission to which Jesus had called them. And yet now, with their leader under arrest, they ran from Him. Perhaps, given the Old Testament examples of Adam and Eve, Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah, we should not be surprised that these disciples whom God had called ran from their Lord. But the fact that Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah all became pillars of the faith when they persevered in spite of doubt and fear should also prepare us to anticipate the turnaround in the disciples’ behavior that will be portrayed in the book, “The Acts of the Apostles.” After first fleeing from God, they will fulfill their true callings.

- What do such turnarounds tell you about God?

SATURDAY 5.27.23 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:14-18; 4:6-18

The letter of 2 Timothy was written by the apostle Paul very late in his life. He knows he is close to death. As he writes to his protégé and successor in ministry Timothy, he is grieved by the fact that so many people are wandering away from the gospel of Jesus Christ that he has been diligently preaching for years, and that was later preserved by church leaders who collected and saved his letters that laid forth the gospel he had been given by the resurrected Jesus Christ. Note the number of people who Paul mentions in today’s readings who have turned away from the truth of his gospel: Phygelus and Hermogenes, along with “everyone in Asia”; Hymenaeus and Philetus; Demas and Alexander. Literally no one was there to support Paul at his first court hearing in Rome. Paul writes to warn Timothy of this truth: People choose to flee from God’s truth, God’s will, and God’s calling all the time. They flee from God by turning away from the faith completely, and they flee from God by twisting the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ to suit their own ideas, wants, and ideologies. Paul prays that Timothy will persevere in truth, stay true to the gospel, and guard it against corruption from without, or from within.

- How might you be fleeing from God right now?



Daily Study Guide

May 21-27, 2023

Sermon Series: Caution, Summer Approaching

Week One: “Vacay” - Rev. Gregory P. Finrock

Scripture for Sunday, May 21: Jonah 1:1-9 (CEB)

“The LORD’s word came to Jonah, Amittai’s son: ‘Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention.’ So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the LORD! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the LORD. But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces. The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter. Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep. The ship’s officer came and said to him. ‘How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won’t perish.’ Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, ‘Come on, let’s cast lots so that we might learn who is to blame for this evil that’s happening to us.’ They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. So they said to him, ‘Tell us, since you’re the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What’s your country and of what people are you?’ He said to them, ‘I’m a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land.’”

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Nini Schneider
- Richard Kunkel

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org