

Being Responsible

Scripture Reading — Jonah 1

“Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?”

Jonah 1:8 —

Each time I read Jonah, I identify more with this obstinate prophet. He knew God was sovereign and would have his way—and yet Jonah ran. Perhaps deep inside he sensed that he could not escape God’s mission, yet he headed west when he was supposed to go east. After all, who would want the responsibility of preaching against a city filled with wickedness? I’m reluctant even to write a letter to the editor of our newspaper!

Jonah paid a fare and boarded a ship, responding differently to God’s command than we might. We’re more inclined just to ignore our responsibility, whether that means telling our neighbor about the love of Jesus or neglecting to gather for worship with God’s people. God can still a storm—ask Jesus’ disciples (see Mark 4:39)—but he can also stir up a storm to get our attention.

Jonah slept deeply while a storm threatened the boat. He woke up to a field of angry faces belonging to frustrated sailors. Not a comfortable situation! They suspected that their trouble had come because of Jonah, because he told them he was running away from the Lord. Showing grace in their reluctance to dump Jonah overboard, they eventually end up doing so. And God’s messenger learned obedience in the depths of despair. Jonah confessed his responsibility for causing the sailors’ distress. If we need to, are we ready to do the same?

Prayer

Father, forgiver of all our sins, guide us in the way of love and obedience so that your name will be honored in the Ninevehs of our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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