

## “LIVING IN THE LIGHT: Answer the Call”

A sermon preached by  
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**Jonah 3:1-5, 10<sup>a</sup>** Then the word of the LORD came upon Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to her the message<sup>b</sup> I speak to you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the LORD’s word. Now, to God Nineveh was a large city,<sup>c</sup> a three-day walk. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began<sup>d</sup> to enter the city, one day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Four days more, and Nineveh will be overturned!” <sup>5</sup> So the people of Nineveh believed in God, called a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they repented<sup>e</sup> of their evil way, God was sorry<sup>f</sup> over the evil he said he would do to them, and he didn’t do it.

**Mark 1:14-20<sup>g</sup>** <sup>14</sup> Now after John had been handed over, Jesus came into the Galilee proclaiming<sup>h</sup> God's good news,<sup>i</sup> <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time<sup>j</sup> has been fulfilled and God’s Kingdom has come near. Repent<sup>k</sup> and have trustful belief in the good news!”<sup>l</sup>

<sup>16</sup> So, walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting a net in the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> Jesus told them, “Come on, follow me, and I will make you into fishers of people!” <sup>18</sup> Immediately they let go of the nets. They followed him. <sup>19</sup> Then, having gone on a little, he saw James, Zebedee’s son, John his brother, and those in the boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately, he called them, and having left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired servants, they went away after him.

At the end of our trip, one of my friends described the way they were feeling as “Exhausted exhilaration.” I’m feeling that way today. I had a wonderful time of spiritual growth and renewal in the Holy Land. I never felt unsafe. It was an incredible experience. I have heard about these places since I was a child, and I’ve studied them in depth for twenty years, but I could not have imagined the beauty and splendor of the land.

There will be time to share more experiences later, but this morning, I’d like to tell you about the trip home. I had stood on the shore where Jesus called those fishermen long ago. I had walked many of the places where they walked together: Galilee, Jericho, Jerusalem, deep down under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the place where Jesus was crucified. I had received communion beside the Garden Tomb.

On the way from Jerusalem to the airport in Tel Aviv, I remembered the disciples. We passed through Emmaus, where the disciples met Jesus as a stranger. We passed through Lydda, where Peter healed Aeneas.

We got on the plane and flew over Joppa. That’s where Jonah got on the ship to run away from God. It’s also where Peter had that vision of the sheet coming down from heaven that told him to share the gospel with all people.

We flew over Turkey and Greece, where Paul shared the gospel with Jews and Gentiles alike. We flew north of Italy, where Peter and Paul gave their lives for the gospel. We flew over Germany, and I thought about that priest, Martin Luther, who experienced God’s grace and confronted a corrupt church. We flew over England, right over the tiny village of Epworth,

where John Wesley, the founder of Methodism was born. A while later, we flew over Manchester north of Birmingham, the birthplace of Francis Asbury.

We flew across the Atlantic, over New York and Philadelphia, where Methodism first took root in America. As we flew out West, I thought about those Methodist circuit riders, carrying the gospel across this land, to the territory that became Arkansas.

We landed in Little Rock, and I was so glad to see Michelle. When we got into town, I couldn't help but remember Samuel Wesley Fordyce, a Methodist railroad man named for John Wesley's father. I thought about Emily's great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Alexander Avery, a Methodist circuit rider in Dallas County. I thought about our church family, all the pastors, all the members, who passed the gospel down to us.

Then, yesterday, I was sitting there at the parsonage trying to get a little rest and kick this cold when the doorbell rang. I opened the door and there were these kids standing there. I knew a couple of them. They said, "We're just going around telling people about Jesus." I said, "I'm a Methodist preacher. I love Jesus!" I sent them across the street to Bro. Blann.

Isn't it amazing how the gospel got to us? And it's all because a handful of fishermen out in the middle of nowhere dropped everything to follow Jesus. Will we? In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>a</sup> Translation, Hammett N. Evans, 2009.

<sup>b</sup> Or *proclamation*.

<sup>c</sup> Literally, *Nineveh was a great city to God*; this describes the city's size, not God's pleasure or delight in the city.

<sup>d</sup> The word for "begin" can also mean "defiled."

<sup>e</sup> Literally, *turned away*.

<sup>f</sup> In other forms, this word means "have compassion."

<sup>g</sup> Translation, Hammett N. Evans, 2009.

<sup>h</sup> Or *preaching*.

<sup>i</sup> Or *gospel*.

<sup>j</sup> Greek: *kairos*.

<sup>k</sup> Literally, *Change your mind*.

<sup>l</sup> Or *gospel*.