



Lenten

Reflections

The Divine Intervention

February 17, 2016

Scripture

Luke 11:29-32

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them,
“This generation is an evil generation;
it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it,
except the sign of Jonah.

Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites,
so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

At the judgment

the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation
and she will condemn them,

because she came from the ends of the earth
to hear the wisdom of Solomon,

and there is something greater than Solomon here.

At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation
and condemn it,

because at the preaching of Jonah they repented,
and there is something greater than Jonah here.”

Our Scripture Reflection

Today's Gospel passage was intended to embarrass Jesus' listeners into repentance. How so? Jonah the Israelite was called by God to preach repentance to his bitterly disposed enemies. Although he rejected this call at first, he is "persuaded" by God to do so. When he opens his mouth to speak the word "repent", Jonah is stunned and disappointed that the entire Kingdom from the king down to the animals repent sincerely and immediately! The "Sign of Jonah" of which Jesus speaks is a way of saying to the Jews in Jesus' audience, "If your despicable, pagan enemies can repent at the drop of a hat when called to do so, what's your excuse???? Why are you so stubborn of heart to change your lives????" The key theme of the Lenten season is "repentance". Are you ready and willing to do so?

Food for your Journey

Anger is a useful diagnostic tool. When anger erupts in us, it is a signal that something is wrong. Something isn't working right. There is evil or incompetence or stupidity lurking about. Anger is our sixth sense for sniffing out wrong in the neighborhood.

What anger fails to do, though, is tell us whether the wrong is outside us or inside us. We usually begin by assuming that the wrong is outside us -- our spouse or our child or our God has done something wrong, and we are angry. That is what Jonah did, and he quarreled with God. But when we track the anger carefully, we often find it leads to a wrong within us -- wrong information, inadequate understanding, underdeveloped heart.

--Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Eerdmans, 1992), 157.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, How small I feel when I ponder Your incredible love for and mercy towards me. How stingy I can be in showing that same love and mercy to others. Lord, with Your Grace, make my heart humble and contrite. Help me to experience true repentance and change. Amen.