JONAH

WHY ARE ANY OF US HERE TODAY? I HOPE WE ARE NOT HERE TO BE SOME KIND OF BLOTTER OR SPONGE & JUST SUCK UP. I HOPE WE ARE HERE TO BE SALT & LIGHT & SAVOR. YOU ONLY REALLY HAVE WHAT YOU GIVE! I HOPE WE ARE ALL HERE TODAY FOR SPIRITUAL PURGING -- TO BE CLEANSED FROM ALL PRIDE & PREJUDICE -- TO RENOUNCE ALL OUR PAST PEEVES & GRIPES & STOP BEING SO DEFENSIVE & APOLOGETIC..... WE NEED TO START THANKING GOD THAT IN CHRIST HE IS REVITALIZING HIS CHURCH & FILLING IT WITH A NEW SENSE OF MISSION. UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE NEED TO MOVE OUT INTO ALL THE NINEVEHS AROUND THE WORLD & SHARE WITH THEM THE PRIVILEGES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR DISCIPLESHIP..... DO YOU REMEMBER THE CONVERSATION OF PETER WITH CORNELIUS IN ACTS 10/11? PETER HAS THIS VISION THAT HE WAS TO EAT ALL THOSE IMPURE & UNCLEAN ANIMALS & BIRDS. THEN PETER WENT TO THE HOME OF CORNELIUS & ATE GENTILE FOOD WITH HIM & HE SAID, "I NOW REALIZE HOW TRUE IT IS THAT GOD DOES NOT SHOW FAVORITISM BUT ACCEPTS MEN FROM EVERY NATION WHO FEAR HIM & DO WHAT IS RIGHT." THEN HE BAPTIZES CORNELIUS & ALL THE PEOPLE PRAISE GOD, SAYING, "SO, THEN, GOD HAS GRANTED EVEN THE GENTILES REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE!" ..... WHAT A FINE SUMMARY THAT IS OF THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF JONAH -- THE GOD-PLEASING REPENTANCE OF THE GENTILES..... THE WORD "JONAH" MEANS "DOVE." THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WERE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO A "A DOVE." REMEMBER HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAME ON JESUS "IN THE FORM OF A DOVE" & HIS FATHER SAID, "THIS IS MY SON IN WHOM I TAKE GREAT DELIGHT?" AND JESUS GREAT COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES IS: "GO INTO ALL THE WORLD * PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE & MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS," .... HERE GOD DEMANDS THAT JONAH RENOUNCE HIS PREJUDICES. BUT JONAH RUNS AWAY! IS THAT OUR TEMPTATION TOO -- TO RUN AWAY FROM OUR RESPONSIBILITIES? ...SO OFTEN WE ARE TWO-SIDED. HERE, JONAH MAKES PERSONAL CONTACT WITH ALL THOSE STRANGERS & FOREIGNERS ON BOARD THE SHIP & HE LIKES THEM SO MUCH HE IS WILLING TO DIE FOR THEM..... HAVE YOU READ THE ARTICLE IN LAST MONTH'S HAPPENINGS BY DR. DAVID HEATON & HIS TRIP TO THE MOUNTAINS OF GUATEMALA. HIS MISSION & MINISTRY CERTAINLY BROUGHT TEARS TO MY EYES. ..... PASTOR DAVID RECENTLY GOT A LETTER FROM A LUTHERAN PASTOR IN GUYANA ASKING FOR HELP. OUR AAL BD. HAS DECIDED TO HAVE A FUND RAISING DINNER TO HELP THEM IN NOV. AGAIN, I GOT EMOTIONAL ABOUT OUR HAVING SO MUCH & THEIR HAVING SO LITTLE.....

I RECENTLY DROVE BY THE HOUSE WE ARE GETTING READY FOR ROGER & BEVERLY RENCH & THEIR 4 CHILDREN -- & ALL THE TIME & EFFORT & MONEY OUR MEMBERS HAVE GIVEN -- & WHAT A SHOT-IN-THE-ARM THIS IS GOING TO BE FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE..... BUT LOOK BACK HERE. JONAH IS SWALLOWED UP BY THIS "GREAT FISH" WHO ALMOST IMMEDIATELY SUFFERS A SEVERE ATTACK OF "ACID INDIGESTION." JONAH HAD A DISPOSITION THAT WAS ENOUGH TO "CURDLE MILK." ..... THE FISH SPITS HIM OUT & HE GOES TO THIS FOREIGN COUNTRY OF ASSYRIA -- THE CITY OF NINEVEH & TELLS THEM THEY HAVE 40 DAYS TO REPENT -- TO TURN AROUND & SHAPE UP & BE SAVED. JONAH DID NOT LIKE THESE PEOPLE IN NINAVEH. THEY WERE NOT A PART OF HIS SYSTEM OR CULTURE, BUT THE PEOPLE HEARD HIM & TURNED FROM THEIR EVIL WAYS & CRIED OUT TO THE LORD FOR MERCY. THEY FASTED & PUT ON SACKCLOTH THE ANIMALS WERE GIVEN NOTHING TO EAT OR TO DRINK. AND GOD DECIDED OUT OF HIS GREAT MERCY TO SPARE THEM / PARDON THEM / FORGIVE THEM!..... WHAT DOES THAT SAY TO US TODAY. IT SAYS GOD SPARES/ PARDONS / FORGIVES EVIL DOERS IF THEY TURN FROM THEIR EVIL WAYS TO HIM. THIS INCLUDES ALL SORTS OF SINNERS / BACK-SLIDERS / SLANDERERS / DRUNKARDS / THIEVES / MARRIAGE BREAKERS -- YOU NAME THEM! GOD'S GRACE IS TRULY AMAZING! DON'T PASS THIS OFF LIGHTLY. SUPPOSE A CRIMINAL IS SENT TO PRISON FOR BURGLARIZING YOUR HOME OR VIOLATING YOUR DAUGHTER OR WIFE OR COMMITTING SOME OTHER GRIEVOUS CRIME --- WOULD YOU NOT WANT TO DEPRIVE SUCH A ONE OF GOD'S GRACE? WOULD YOU NOT WANT A CHAPLAIN TO VISIT HIM OR PREACH REPENTANCE TO HIM? WHAT IF THE LORD BRINGS HIM TO REPENTANCE -- WILL Y O U FORGIVE HIM & LET HIM CONTINUE AS A MEMBER OF THIS CONGREGATION IN GOOD STANDING?.... THE STORY ENDS WITH JONAH WITH JONAH SITTING UNDER A CASTOR OIL TREE, CASTOR OIL IS AN EXCELLENT REMEDY FOR A STOMACH ACHE -- SO THE LORD USES CASTOR OIL FOR JONAH'S SPIRITUAL STOMACH ACHE. THE HEBREW WORD IS "KIKA-YON"WHICH SUGGESTS: KICK JONAH! HE NEEDS A KICK IN THE PANTS BECAUSE OF HIS PREJUDICE. THE SHADE OF THE TREE SERVES AS A GOOD UMBRELLA FOR JONAH. THE LORD SENDS A WORM TO ATTACK THE TREE / THEN A SCORCHING EAST WIND / HOT RAYS OF SUN TO PLAGUE JONAH. JONAH WANTS TO CURL UP & DIE, LORD SAYS, YOU, JONAH, DID NOT WANT THIS CASTOR OIL TREE DESTROYED / YOU HAD PITY ON IT EVEN THOUGH IT COST YOU NO WORK. YOU DID NOT MAKE IT GROW -- I DID! NOW APPLY THAT TO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH / 120,000 CHILDREN -- AM I NOT RIGHT IN FORGIVING THEM? HOW ABOUT US? ARE WE WILLING TO DIG