

The Prophet Jonah

World of the Text:

- The book of Jonah is satire!
 - o Jonah is expected to behave a certain way, but does not.
- Takes place during the 8th century BC when Assyrians were in control.
- Story line
 - o Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh, but goes in opposite direction (Jon 1:1-3) via ship.
 - o God tries to get his attention by starting a huge storm.
 - o Non-Jewish sailors get the point: Jonah is thrown overboard.
 - o God provides safety for Jonah by having him swallowed by a fish.
 - o Jonah is in fish for three days.
 - o Psalm of Thanksgiving (Jon 2:3-2:11)
 - o Ninevites immediately accept Jonah's words -- even animals.
 - o God's salvation for all people.
 - o Jonah is angry and upset that God does not destroy the people of Nineveh.
 - o Jonah goes out of city to mope and his favorite tree dies.
 - o Jonah gets upset over dead tree.
 - o God chides Jonah for his bigoted behavior
 - If Jonah is so concerned about a tree, should he not be concerned more for people?
 - o Humor is used to make a powerful point
- Organization of the Book of Jonah
 - o 4 Chapters
 - 1. The First Mission (Jon 1:1—2:2)
 - 2. Psalm of Thanksgiving (Jon 2:3—2:11)
 - 3. Conversion of Nineveh (Jon 3)
 - 4. Jonah's Anger: God's Reproof (Jon 4)

World Behind the Text:

- Written AFTER the Babylonian Exile, perhaps the 5th century. Probably during the time after the Exile, during the Diaspora.
- Jewish leaders encouraged Jewish people to stay away from Gentiles
 - o Since Jews were living all over the empire there was temptation to be like other people
 - o The idea was to prevent them from falling into idolatry again
 - o The result of this "policy" was religious bigotry!
- Jonah is a fictional character, he represents all of us

Message to Original Audience

- God is the God of all people – even of one's enemies
- Religious bigotry is not acceptable in God's eyes.
- The point is to correct religious bigotry.
- Righteous behavior does not mean hating others.
- Narrow attitudes are not accepted by God.

World in Front of the Text and Actualization

- Do I consider people not like me to be inferior or not worthy?
- What is my attitude towards others?
- Am I willing to do God's will, or do I run away?
- Am I more concerned with my own needs and miss the goodness of others?
- Do I practice religious bigotry? Does my country exhibit such behavior?
- Is religious bigotry present today?
- Do certain religious groups hate others?