

JONAH 1:1–2:1

1 The Lord's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: 2 "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention."

3 So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the Lord! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Lord. 4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces. 5 The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter.

Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep. 6 The ship's officer came and said to him, "How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won't perish."

7 Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, "Come on, let's cast lots so that we might learn who is to blame for this evil that's happening to us." They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they said to him, "Tell us, since you're the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What's your country and of what people are you?"

9 He said to them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land."

10 Then the men were terrified and said to him, "What have you done?" (The men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the Lord, because he had told them.)

11 They said to him, "What will we do about you so that the sea will become calm around us?" (The sea was continuing to rage.)

12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea! Then the sea will become calm around you. I know it's my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

13 The men rowed to reach dry land, but they couldn't manage it because the sea continued to rage against them. 14 So they called on the Lord, saying, "Please, Lord, don't let us perish on account of this man's life, and don't blame us for innocent blood! You are the Lord: whatever you want, you can do." 15 Then they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging. 16 The men worshipped the Lord with a profound reverence; they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made solemn promises.

17 [a] Meanwhile, the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

2 Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish.

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

The Lord's power overcame me, and while I was in the Lord's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. 2 He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

3 He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?"

I said, "Lord God, only you know."

4 He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the Lord's word! 5 The Lord God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. 6 I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the Lord."

7 I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. 8 When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

9 He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human one! Say to the breath, The Lord God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live."

10 I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

11 He said to me, "Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.' 12 So now, prophesy and say to them, The Lord God proclaims: I'm opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel's fertile land. 13 You will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people. 14 I will put my breath in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the Lord. I've spoken, and I will do it. This is what the Lord says."

Exodus 14:10-31

10 As Pharaoh drew closer, the Israelites looked back and saw the Egyptians marching toward them. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord. 11 They said to Moses, "Weren't there enough graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt like this? 12 Didn't we tell you the same thing in Egypt? 'Leave us alone! Let us work for the Egyptians!' It would have been better for us to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert."

13 But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. 14 The Lord will fight for

you. You just keep still.”

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. 16 As for you, lift your shepherd’s rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground. 17 But me, I’ll make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will go in after them, and I’ll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, all his army, his chariots, and his cavalry. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his cavalry.”

19 God’s messenger, who had been in front of Israel’s camp, moved and went behind them. The column of cloud moved from the front and took its place behind them. 20 It stood between Egypt’s camp and Israel’s camp. The cloud remained there, and when darkness fell it lit up the night. They didn’t come near each other all night.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord pushed the sea back by a strong east wind all night, turning the sea into dry land. The waters were split into two. 22 The Israelites walked into the sea on dry ground. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left. 23 The Egyptians chased them and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and cavalry. 24 As morning approached, the Lord looked down on the Egyptian camp from the column of lightning and cloud and threw the Egyptian camp into a panic. 25 The Lord jammed their chariot wheels so that they wouldn’t turn easily. The Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites, because the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!”

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water comes back and covers the Egyptians, their chariots, and their cavalry.” 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. At daybreak, the sea returned to its normal depth. The Egyptians were driving toward it, and the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the cavalry, Pharaoh’s entire army that had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained. 29 The Israelites, however, walked on dry ground through the sea. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left.

30 The Lord rescued Israel from the Egyptians that day. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the amazing power of the Lord against the Egyptians. The people were in awe of the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand. All the women followed her playing tambourines and dancing. 21 Miriam sang the refrain back to them:

Sing to the Lord, for an overflowing victory!
Horse and rider he threw into the sea!

DANIEL 3:1-29

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue. It was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He set it

up in the Dura Valley in the province of Babylon. 2 King Nebuchadnezzar then ordered the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to assemble and come for the dedication of the statue that he had set up. 3 So the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood in front of the statue the king had set up. 4 The herald proclaimed loudly: “Peoples, nations, and languages! This is what you must do: 5 When you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument, you must bow down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Anyone who will not bow down and worship will be immediately thrown into a furnace of flaming fire.” 7 So because of this order as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute,[a] and every kind of instrument, all the peoples, nations, and languages bowed down and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 At that moment some Chaldeans came forward, seizing a chance to attack the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar:

“Long live the king! 10 Your Majesty, you gave a command that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument should bow down and worship the gold statue. 11 Anyone who wouldn’t bow and worship would be thrown into a furnace of flaming fire. 12 Now there are some Jews, ones you appointed to administer the province of Babylon—specifically, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who have ignored your command. They don’t serve your gods, and they don’t worship the gold statue you’ve set up.”

13 In a violent rage Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were brought before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Is it true that you don’t serve my gods or worship the gold statue I’ve set up? 15 If you are now ready to do so, bow down and worship the gold statue I’ve made when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument. But if you won’t worship it, you will be thrown straight into the furnace of flaming fire. Then what god will rescue you from my power?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar: “We don’t need to answer your question. 17 If our God—the one we serve—is able to rescue us from the furnace of flaming fire and from your power, Your Majesty, then let him rescue us.[b] 18 But if he doesn’t, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you’ve set up.”

19 Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his face twisted beyond recognition because of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In response he commanded that the furnace be heated to seven times its normal heat. 20 He told some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the furnace of flaming fire. 21 So Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego were bound, still dressed in all their clothes, and thrown into the furnace of flaming fire. (22 Now the king's command had been rash, and the furnace was heated to such an extreme that the fire's flame killed the very men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it.) 23 So these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell, bound, into the furnace of flaming fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, "Didn't we throw three men, bound, into the fire?"

They answered the king, "Certainly, Your Majesty."

25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods." 26 Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. 27 The chief administrators, ministers, governors, and the king's associates crowded around to look at them. The fire hadn't done anything to them: their hair wasn't singed; their garments looked the same as before; they didn't even smell like fire!

28 Nebuchadnezzar declared: "May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent his messenger[c] to rescue his servants who trusted him. They ignored the king's order, sacrificing their bodies, because they wouldn't serve or worship any god but their God. 29 I now issue a decree to every people, nation, and language: whoever speaks disrespectfully about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God will be torn limb from limb and their house made a trash heap, because there is no other god who can rescue like this."

JOHN 20:1-18

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him." 3 Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. 4 They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. 5 Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in. 6 Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. 7 He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. 8 Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 They didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

11 Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. 13 The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him." 14 As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be pleasing to you O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer:
Amen.

THIS. IS. THE NIGHT! This is the night of Jonah's deliverance from the whale, of the Israelites deliverance from the Red Sea and the Egyptians, of the dry bones deliverance back to bodily life, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's deliverance from the fiery furnace, of Jesus's deliverance from death and the grave. This is a night to celebrate, a night that burns with the creative fire of God's very heart.

This is also the night where we get to start worship with a campfire. How cool is that? A liturgically sanctioned reasons for s'mores? In truth, this fire isn't about roasting snacks, but about abolishing the reign of shadows, about casting heat and light and in so doing reminding the cold darkness that there's nowhere to

hide from the bright warmth of Christ's resurrection. It is a sign of the fire that kept warm the women who awaited Jesus at the tomb and the men who cooked the food that Jesus ate. And like so many fires throughout history, it's a fire where stories are told.

It is by that fire, by that light, that the story of God is retold, rehearsed, and ultimately, **recapitulated**. Yes, that's our purpose tonight: to retell stories of God's faithfulness, stories that we need to not only hear, but to experience firsthand. We retell the stories, and we echo each one with, "this is the night," as a reminder that this night is not just any night, but rather the night in which all of God's redemptive story invades all of God's fallen creation. We also rehearse the stories, we reenact them. They're performances in this space, where we repeat the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples on the Thursday before his death, where we repeat the actions of Jesus in blessing others, in reading scripture, in praying to God, and most of all, forgiving sins. This is something like the

Off Broadway production, but the original cast, and every previous cast, is gathered here with us through the Holy Spirit to share in this magnificent meal of salvation. But what Jesus does tonight is more than just retell or rehearse these stories. Tonight, Jesus recapitulates the entire history of Israel and the entire story of the church...all in just over an hour.

What does that mean? It's like repetition, but it's more than that. It's like rehearsing, or redoing, but it's even more than that. If I recapitulate something, I bring all of it's history into the present, but I also embrace the future of the event. For instance, when a couple renews their wedding vows, they aren't just rehearsing the same actions they performed on their original wedding day.

They're repeating them with a new purpose in mind, recommitting their lives to live together in the future, but a future based in all the history they shared between their wedding day and the present moment of recommitment. Recapitulation leaves space for, and

indeed thrives upon, evolution toward harmony. It's God's promise of faithfulness into the future based in the evidence of God's faithfulness in the past.

That's the kind of recapitulation that happens tonight, at the Easter Vigil. Beginning with the Last Supper on Thursday, through the crucifixion on Friday, and through Saturday when Jesus descends into the depths of hell to bring all the dead with him into resurrection life, Jesus is recapitulating the history of all of Israel. He's repeating the history of all God's people. He's reenacting the history of all creation, and committing to a future with us all based in the past that we've shared with God. This is the night where God ensures the eventual harmony, the eventual unity of all things, in Christ Jesus.

This is the night that Jonah prayed to the Lord from the belly of the fish, and Jesus prayed to the Lord from the belly of hell. This is the night when the fish vomited Jonah forth onto dry ground in

order to bring deliverance to Ninevah, and the night when the grave spews forth Jesus to bring salvation to all lands. This is the night that God hears and answers the prayers of Jonah, the prayers of Jesus, and the prayers of all who feel the darkness deepening.

This is the night, foreseen by Ezekiel, when the Lord knits together the dry bones of Israel, putting flesh on the skeleton of the people of God, and where the Holy Spirit breathes new life into the body of Jesus. This is the night when that flesh rises from the dead, the flesh of humanity and the flesh of God, full of the Holy Spirit breath, breathing life into all who call on the name of the Lord. This is the night when the rattling bones of our dry faith receive the fullness of God's life and walk anew into God's future.

This is this night when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walk around the fiery furnace of hell with the one who looked like one of the gods, who is the God above all God, who is Jesus, and

when Jesus walked through every hallway in hell to raise from the dead all who've gone into the death, so that they can join his return trip into life. This is the night when our bodies should be destroyed by suffering and instead they're purified by the presence of God, because God sank down to the depths to find us. This is the night when God's prophecy and God's promise are fulfilled in God's person.

This is the night that, among us, Miriam raises the song of the Israelites freed from the Egyptians through the Red Sea, for on this night the Lord rescues us from our oppressor, the one who would enslave us forever, that terrible master named Sin, and where another Mary awaits for one more miracle at the edge of the tomb. This is the night when we walk through the walls of our baptismal waters, surrounded by the evidence of God's great deliverance, the stories of God's faithfulness from before and the presence of God's faithfulness today promise to us God's overflowing victory,

where the enemy of sin is drowned in in the waters of Jesus's baptismal death.

This is the night, and truly, the first part of the morning, when Mary runs to meet us, with the word of an empty tomb. The word that Jesus's body is gone. The word that our teacher, that our friend, that our Lord, is risen from the dead. This is the night where the impossible becomes possible, where hope breaks the bonds of hopelessness, where faith fills every crevasse once invaded by doubt. This is the night when Jesus Christ is born again, firstborn from Mary, now first born from the dead.

It's that history, and truly all of history - from the moment with the Spirit hovered over the waters to the moment when the Spirit gave Sarah and Abraham a child in their barrenness to the moment where God delivers Ruth a new family to all the moments not recorded in Scripture that happened beyond Israel, where God's faithfulness worked to revive and restore abundant life to all

people - it's all of history that Jesus recapitulates tonight, that Jesus rehearses with us and then recommits to a future, an eternity, filled with your redemption, my redemption, and surely redemption of all creation.

Here's the beauty of Jesus's future. This future reflects God's faithfulness in these stories, but is not determined by the common theme of our failure. Instead, when Jesus recapitulates all of history on this night, Jesus evolves our relationship. Jesus guarantees that our sin will no longer stand as a separation between us and God, that death will no longer stand as a separation between us and God, that nothing, neither height nor depth or angels or demons or powers or rulers or any other thing will separate us from the love of God, for this is the night where relentless love brings Jesus to life from the grave. This is the night of resurrection, so nothing in your past, no amount of pain caused by others or failures of your own can rip you away from the grip of

God, for in rising from the dead Jesus renewed God's wedding vows to humanity: This is the night where Eden is restored and eternity is opened forever.

This is the night where we see, where we understand, where we relive the reality, that there's nothing that God won't do to be with you. Seas, with with billions of gallons of water, can't separate us from the freedom God intends, because God is on the side of freedom. Our obstinance that causes us to hate our neighbors in the Nineveh's of our lives can't separate God's love from them, or even from us, because God is on the side of reconciliation. No fiery furnace, no anger from unjust authorities, can separate us from the love of God, because God is on the side of justice and life. No dry bones, not the skeletons in the grave or even the skeletons in our closet, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, because God is on the side of resurrection.

This is the night where resurrection becomes the new law of the new land. This is the night where everything is remade. This is the night where our Amens break out into Alleluias! Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia. Amen.