

1-14-18

## Changing Our Minds

Jonah 3: 1-5    1 Cor. 7: 29-31    Mark 1:14-20

RR: Psalm 62: 5-12

Summary: I have found the hardest thing to change is my mind; yet I'm called "to have the mind of Christ." It is a matter of focus.

Everyone knows my history here at Gaines UCC; so, I think no one will have any doubts when I say that I have a lot of experience with change. I have experienced physical changes, mental changes, spiritual change, emotional changes, and social changes. It is with some authority, then, that I can tell you the hardest thing a person might try to change is to change their minds.

That said, the most remarkable thing about the section I read from the book of Jonah is that God -- who changes not and is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow -- our God changes His mind. If we listen closely, we can see it is precisely because of God's unchanging love that He is flexible enough to adapt to a changing situation in Nineveh.

Other leaders, especially kings, have not shown this kind of flexibility. Once making a vow, an “important” man often feels obligated to his word, even if things go south! King Herod pops to mind in the incident of Salome and John the Baptist’s head. Abraham would have sacrificed Isaac, had not God intervened. The warrior Jephthah kept a bad vow (Judges 11: 29-40) and killed his only child. If even God can change His mind to be true to Himself, so can I -- so should I.

In Philippians, Paul urges us to “have this mind in you, which was in Christ Jesus.” This is a mind which chooses God’s priorities over its own agenda in a world which is in constant change.

Jesus said the same thing of course. The Kingdom of Heaven must be more important than my parents, my children, my spouse, or myself. Jesus’ disciples were men involved in their daily work, their livelihoods. The fishermen leave their father, who expected them to follow in the family business. Matthew, a despised tax collector dared to follow Jesus despite attitudes which not only doubted him, but cast doubt on Jesus for associating with him. Even Jesus chose the gospel when His

mother, brothers, and sisters showed up to intervene when things were getting dangerous.

It is time to change our minds' focus from self to God. Because we are made in God's image, this change is the only way to be true, to really become ourselves. Only those who lose their lives this way will find them. If Jesus could leave heaven to come to me in this world, I can leave anything in this world to come to Him. So, I have found my mind in the image of the One who made my mind and calls her to Himself as His bride. May this mind, the mind of Christ, unique to each of us, be in you all. Amen.