

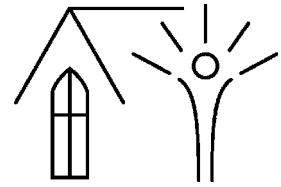


ROSELLE
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Our Mission Statement:

*“To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ”*



January 22, 2006

Sermon – “The Most Dangerous Job”

Jonah 3:1-5,10

Reverend Thomas Kim

Do you think what the most dangerous job is in America? The magazine *mental_floss* (May-June 2005) published a list of jobs that really do kill.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “timber cutter” ranked as the most dangerous job in America in 2002, with an annual fatality rate of 117.8 per 100,000 workers.

The 10 most dangerous jobs are: *timber cutters, fishers, pilots and navigators, structural metal workers, drivers, roofers, electrical power installers, farm workers, construction laborers and truck drivers.* Working can be hazardous to your health.

I would like to add reporters also one of hazardous jobs in the world. You know that the number of the total casualties of reporters in Iraq already out-numbered those of the Vietnam war reporters. And we pray for the reporter Jill Carroll, a 28-year-old freelance reporter on assignment in Iraq for a Boston-based newspaper who was abducted by gunmen in Baghdad and remains missing. Mining is also another dangerous job.

No figures exist — that we know of — that tell us how dangerous it is to be a *pastor* these days, although reliable sources suggest that lingering too long at food-laden tables at church potlucks can be a problem.

To this list, however, we’ve got to add the category “biblical prophet.” No more dangerous job in the Bible than being a prophet. They frequently got killed. And Jonah knew it. He knew how hazardous and difficult it could be to speak for God to the people, and he is far from enthusiastic when he receives a word from the Lord: Here is your mission: “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” (1:2)

It sounded like an impossible mission. Front page of the *Chicago Tribune* Sports section, January 20, 2006, says “Courting trouble” about the last Wednesday night game at the United Center. Some say it is tough to cheer for an opposing team.

Jonah is being sent to the capital of Assyria, a powerful enemy of Israel, and is being asked to preach against it. Like, who would volunteer today to fly to Baghdad, or Riyadh, to walk the streets and call Muslim extremists to repent of their sins? Nineveh was located in what is now Mosul, in northern Iraq.

So Jonah bolts in the *opposite* direction, taking off for Tarshish in an effort to escape the presence of the Lord. He hops on a boat, encounters a storm, is thrown overboard, and is swallowed by the famous fish. Finally he is spewed out on dry land, and the word of the Lord comes to him again: “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you” (3:2).

This time Jonah goes to Nineveh. He enters the city and walks for only one day, making his way just a third of the distance across this daunting and dangerous city.

“Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” he shouts like a madman (3:4). He cries out against the enormous and powerful city, not knowing if they will hear him and heed him ... or just tear him to pieces.

To everyone’s surprise, the Ninevites believe in God, and repent of their sins. When God sees what they do, God changes his mind. They don’t die; they live. Too bad! That’s what Jonah thought.

Jonah goes over the edge, taking a killer job about as far as it will go. And what he finds on the other side is ... life.

There is a message for us in this story. The message of Jonah is all about hearing the word of God and obeying it. When we’re obedient to God — even after a time of running in the opposite direction, as Jonah did — we find that our efforts result in life, not death. Regardless of what career path we are pursuing, obedience to God can open up new possibilities for renewal and regeneration.

A cartoon shows two boys walking to school, discussing their parents. One of them says to the other one, “I’ve figured out a system for getting along with my Mom. She tells me what to do and I do it.”

I hope our young people understand the value of obedience. I believe every young person in this room knows that Mom and Dad are on your side. When they say, “What we really want is for your own good,” they really mean it.

It is also true to all of us as well. We have to figure out a system for getting along with God. God tells us what to do and we do it!

Samuel said to Saul, “Obedience is better than sacrifice.” New life comes from obeying God, even when we’re in a killer job. Keep in mind that Jonah’s primary problem was one of willful disobedience. When he originally turned and headed for Tarshish, he was disobeying a direct command of God.

Father Mapple, the preacher in another great fish story, Herman Melville’s novel *Moby Dick*, points out that God often speaks to us in commands, because he knows that what he wants of us is difficult. “*If we obey God, we must disobey ourselves,*” Mapple says; “*and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists.*”

The problem with obedience is that it is a tough sell. You hear the words “be obedient,” and it sounds as if you are being asked to eat your vegetables and exercise 30 minutes a day. There’s just nothing exciting about it, nothing to get you pumped up and inspired. But like good nutrition and exercise, obedience can enrich and even extend your life. There is nothing more deadly than poor eating habits, inactivity ... and disobedience to God.

Promiscuity, cheating, lying — and expand this list as you see fit — these are “running away from God” kinds of sins. So, what’s the alternative? In a word, obedience. It can be dangerous work, but rewarding.

Obedience. It’s dangerous, because **we might be laughed at.**

It’s dangerous because we **might be misunderstood.**

It’s dangerous because we’ll have to **put the interests of others ahead of our own.**

It’s dangerous because it could **send us into unfamiliar territory.**

It’s dangerous because **we can’t be sure what God might ask of us.**

It’s dangerous because being **obedient doesn’t come naturally to us.**

It’s dangerous because we’ll be asked to **turn the other cheek.**

It’s dangerous because we’ll be asked to **love our enemies.**

It’s dangerous because we’ll be asked to **be a peacemaker.**

It’s dangerous because we’ll be asked to **pray for those who “despitefully use” us.**

Before you book your ticket for Tarshish, remember that while being in God’s service can be hazardous, it is also the only place that offers life and blessing and a sense of peace.

Dallas Willard, in his book **THE SPIRIT OF THE DISCIPLINES: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD CHANGES LIVES**, says that the average Christian has no concept of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He writes: “*For at least several decades the churches...have not made discipleship a condition for being a Christian. One is not required to be or [even] intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one may remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship. Contemporary American churches...do not require following Christ in his example, spirit and teachings as a condition of membership...discipleship clearly is optional.*” (p 258)

Is this what Jesus has in mind when he calls persons to be his followers? Being a modern day disciple of Jesus Christ involves more than just going to church when the urge hits us. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is more than hymn singing and vague good will toward our neighbors.

Valerie Place isn’t a name you will recognize. According to worldly standards she is an ordinary woman. In 1992, twenty-three-year-old Valerie Place went to Somalia to work as a nurse. She wanted to help people who had nothing. She wanted to offer them a better way of life.

Valerie was concerned about her safety, but nothing would stop her from doing her work. She was in charge of a feeding center in Mogadishu. Through her life-saving efforts, children who had been near starvation were fed. Valerie even established a school so the children could learn and have some hope for the future. Valerie was fortunate to see some of the fruits of her labors.

A year later in 1993, Valerie made the national news. She was killed by armed bandits outside the school she had started. Valerie was willing to risk her life to help other people. (“Can We Learn the Mystery of Crossing Over to Love?” Barbara Reynolds. USA TODAY, February 26, 1993, p. 13A) Valerie was no generic Christian but a disciple. How about you? In which category would you place yourself? Jesus calls us to follow him. Discipleship always costs, but the price is worth it. The key is obedient to God.

The 10 most dangerous jobs in America. The list says nothing about “disciple of Jesus Christ.” Sign up for that “job” and you’re signing up for the toughest, the most dangerous — but most rewarding — “job” of all. Again remember, it is the most dangerous job.