

A Series of Special Services for LENT



The Sign Of
JONAH

By Dr. Reed Lessing

The Sign Of
JONAH
A Series of Special Services for LENT
by Dr. Reed Lessing



Index

About The Sign Of Jonah..... 4-6

Ash Wednesday • God Is Calling..... 7-27

First Week Of Lent • Saved In The Storm 28-49

Second Week Of Lent • Our Providing God 50-69

Third Week Of Lent • Praying In The Belly Of The Great Big Fish 70-89

Fourth Week Of Lent • The God Of The Second Chance 90-109

Fifth Week Of Lent • About Face! 110-131

Music Guide 132-160

The Sign Of **JONAH**

A Series of Special Services for LENT
by Dr. Reed Lessing

About The Sign Of Jonah

Jonah ... for Lent? Sounds fishy, but it's a natural fit. When the Jews asked Jesus for a sign, he said, "I will give you only the sign of Jonah." After three days in the belly of the earth, Jesus rose with news of God's prodigal grace. This series of special services explores the meaning of "The Sign of Jonah" as we follow Jonah on his journey ... and Jesus on his way to the cross. Written by seminary professor Dr. Reed Lessing.

Ash Wednesday • God Is Calling (Jonah 1:1-3)

First Week of Lent • Saved in the Storm (Jonah 1:4-16)

Second Week of Lent • Our Providing God (Jonah 1:1-17)

Third Week of Lent • Praying from the Belly of the Great Big Fish (Jonah 2:1-10)

Fourth Week of Lent • The God of the Second Chance (Jonah 3:1-4)

Fifth Week of Lent • About Face (Jonah 3:5-10)

For each service the kit contains: sample bulletins with complete orders of service • sermons • prayers • music for the accompanist.

Ordering Information

Additional resources are available from Creative Communications for the Parish. Contact us for current pricing and availability. Call us at 1-800-325-9414. Or visit our website: www.creativecommunications.com.

Bulletins For This Kit:

Code **JH-P** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-2** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-T** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

Add These Holy Week Services To Complete The Series:

Those who desire may supplement this series with other services that continue the series format and theme. Each is ordered separately and includes all the Leader's Guide features described above. Orders for all three kits include a CD-ROM (Mac/PC) in RTF format with text of services and of bulletins, plus PDF files of the kit.

Maundy Thursday • On The Same Page (Jonah 4:1-2)

Code **JH-4** • Maundy Thursday Kit

Code **JH-F** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-G** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-H** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

Good Friday • The Answer! (Jonah 4:3-11)

Code **JH-5** • Good Friday Kit

Code **JH-J** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-K** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-M** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

Easter Sunday • The Sign Of Life! (Matthew 12:41)

Code **JH-6** • Easter Sunday Kit

Code **JH-O** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-R** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-S** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

Code **JH-9** • Kit Of All Three Services

The Ash Wednesday Kit Can Be Ordered Independently:

Ash Wednesday • God Is Calling (Jonah 1:1-3)

Code **JH-3** • Ash Wednesday Kit

Code **JH-B** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-D** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **JH-E** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

Take Home Prayer Cards:

A set of Prayer Cards incorporate bulletin art and prayers from the series. Hand them out at each service, or before them to publicize the services.

Code **JH-A** • Prayer Cards For Six-Service Kit

Code **JA-3** • Maundy Thursday Prayer Card

Code **JA-4** • Good Friday Prayer Card

Code **JA-5** • Easter Sunday Prayer Card

Code **JA-2** • Ash Wednesday Prayer Card

Other Resources:

Code **JH-7** • Promotional Bulletin Insert

Code **JH-8** • A Display Poster • 11" x 17"

Code **PHA-X** • Cloth Banner Suitable For Worship

Bible Study Resources:

Code **JB-S** • The Sign Of Jonah Student Guide

Code **JB-L** • The Sign Of Jonah Leader Guide

Devotional Resources:

Code **SJ-1** • Daily Devotional Prayers For Lent

Code **ST-M** • Children's Daily Sticker Activity For Lent

The Sign Of JONAH

Ash Wednesday: God Is Calling

Order Of Service.....	8-11
Complete Script For Worship Leaders.....	12-20
Scripture Readings.....	21
Homily: God Is Calling.....	22-25
Prayers.....	26
Study Prompts.....	27

The Sign Of JONAH

Ash Wednesday: God Is Calling

Order Of Service

+++

P *For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her.*

C The appointed time has come. (Psalm 102:9-13)

Hymn Jesus, I Will Ponder Now

Jesus, I will ponder now on your holy Passion;
Let your Spirit now endow me for meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith may the image cherish
Of your suff'ring, pain, and death, that I may not perish.

Make me see your great distress, anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness and your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, spear and nails did wound you,
How you died for those, O God, who with thorns had crowned you.

Yet, O Lord, not thus alone make me see your Passion,
But its cause to me make known and its termination.
For I also and my sin wrought your deep affliction;
This the shameful cause has been of your crucifixion.

- P** *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
- C** *And with you also.*

Prayer of the Day

Confession

- P** *Gracious Lord, ashes remind us of our human frailty and mortality. You are eternal, but we are limited in our days. Someday we will return to dust and ashes. You remind us of this in your Word:*
- C** *Dust we are and to dust we shall return.* (Genesis 3:19; Psalm 90:3)
- P** *Ashes speak of condemnation for sin. When Adam fell into sin, judgment and death came to all. Since we all are born into sin, we are marked for death and ashes.*
- C** *Dust we are and to dust we shall return.*
- P** *Ashes speak of our total dependence upon you, O God. We are but frail human beings who must rely upon you, dear Father. We think we are capable of taking care of ourselves and make our own plans for greatness. However, so often these plans fail and crumble into ashes.*
- C** *Dust we are and to dust we shall return.*
- P** *Ashes speak of our humiliation and repentance. As people in the Bible humbled themselves and expressed their repentance and mourning in the signs of sackcloth and ashes, we also humble ourselves before you, O God, as we ask you to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, our Lord. As we repent we put on dust and ashes.*
- C** *Dust we are and to dust we shall return.*
- P** *People of God, as we see the meaning of ashes and dust for us as Christians, we now make our earnest confession unto the Lord.*
- C** *Almighty God, you have always warned your people against trusting in false gods. We are sinful and this nature has given birth to sinful deeds: things we have done and things we have left undone. We are but dust and ash of the ground and we deserve nothing more than to return to the dust. Though we deserve your stern judgment, but for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive and renew us. Amen.*

+++

- P** *You have heard the Word of the Lord, "Repent, and believe the gospel." With these words, Jesus began his ministry and now directs us to make repentance and hear his good news. Therefore, as you have made repentance, now hear the gospel. I, as a called and ordained servant of Christ, announce to you the grace of God. Your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Hymn Jesus, I Will Ponder Now

Grant that I your Passion view with repentant grieving
Nor you crucify anew by unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun ev'ry sinful pleasure
Since for me God's only Son suffered without measure?

If my sins give me alarm and my conscience grieve me,
Let your cross my fear disarm, peace of conscience give me.
Grant that I may faithfully lean upon your Passion.
If his only Son loves me, God must have compassion.

Grant that I may willingly bear with you my crosses,
Learning humbleness of you, peace mid pain and losses.
May I give you love for love! Hear me, O my Savior,
That I may in heav'n above sing your praise forever.

First Reading Jonah 1:1-3

Holy Gospel Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

The Creed

Hymn Hark, The Voice Of Jesus Calling

Hark, the voice of Jesus calling, "Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvests waiting, who will bear the sheaves away?"
Loud and long the master calls you; rich reward he offers free.
Who will answer, gladly saying, "Here am I. Send me, send me"?

Let none hear you idly saying, "There is nothing I can do,"
While the multitudes are dying and the master calls for you.
Take the task he gives you gladly; let his work your pleasure be.
Answer quickly when he calls you, "Here am I. Send me, send me!"

The Sign Of Jonah: "God is Calling!"

Offering and Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

(If Holy Communion is celebrated, it may take place here.)

The Blessing

Closing Hymn Abide With Me

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

For Next Week

Read Jonah 1:4-16.

1. Even when God, in his grace, has sought me, how have I dug in my heels, refusing to hearken to him?
2. How has my acting in such a fashion caused trouble for others?
3. How was Jonah's sacrifice similar to, as well as different from, that of Christ's sacrifice on the cross?

The Sign Of JONAH

Ash Wednesday: God Is Calling

Complete Script For Worship Leaders

- You may consider creating a **Lenten Cross** to light. It would be analogous to an Advent Wreath. It could be made out of two logs forming a cross with six candles in it. Light the whole cross on Ash Wednesday and then each week extinguish a candle as a reminder that Holy Week is coming.
- If you are using a **Lenten Cross**, all six candles may be lit at this time.
- This **Call To Worship** is offered by the pastor and the congregation:
- Ⓟ *For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her.*
- Ⓒ The appointed time has come. (Psalm 102:9-13)
- The **Hymn** *Jesus, I Will Ponder Now*, is sung by the congregation to the tune *Jesu Kreuz, Leiden Und Pein* 76 76 D:

Jesus, I will ponder now on your holy Passion;
Let your Spirit now endow me for meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith may the image cherish
Of your suff'ring, pain, and death, that I may not perish.

Make me see your great distress, anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness and your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, spear and nails did wound you,
How you died for those, O God, who with thorns had crowned you.

Yet, O Lord, not thus alone make me see your Passion,
But its cause to me make known and its termination.
For I also and my sin wrought your deep affliction;
This the shameful cause has been of your crucifixion.

P *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C And with you also.

- The **Prayer Of The Day** may be offered from your own liturgical tradition.
- This **Confession Of Sins** is offered by the congregation and the pastor:

P *Gracious Lord, ashes remind us of our human frailty and mortality. You are eternal, but we are limited in our days. Someday we will return to dust and ashes. You remind us of this in your Word:*

C Dust we are and to dust we shall return. (Genesis 3:19; Psalm 90:3)

P *Ashes speak of condemnation for sin. When Adam fell into sin, judgment and death came to all. Since we all are born into sin, we are marked for death and ashes.*

C Dust we are and to dust we shall return.

P *Ashes speak of our total dependence upon you, O God. We are but frail human beings who must rely upon you, dear Father. We think we are capable of taking care of ourselves and make our own plans for greatness. However, so often these plans fail and crumble into ashes.*

C Dust we are and to dust we shall return.

P *Ashes speak of our humiliation and repentance. As people in the Bible humbled themselves and expressed their repentance and mourning in the signs of sackcloth and ashes, we also humble ourselves before you, O God, as we ask you to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, our Lord. As we repent we put on dust and ashes.*

C Dust we are and to dust we shall return.

P *People of God, as we see the meaning of ashes and dust for us as Christians, we now make our earnest confession unto the Lord.*

C Almighty God, you have always warned your people against trusting in false gods. We are sinful and this nature has given birth to sinful deeds: things we have done and things we have left undone. We are but dust and ash of the ground and we deserve nothing more than to return to the dust. Though we deserve your stern judgment, but for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive and renew us. Amen.

- If your congregation observes an **Imposition Of Ashes** on Ash Wednesday, you may perform the rite at this time. Worshipers are invited to come up quietly to the front of the church and receive ashes on their foreheads with the words from Mark 1:15: “Repent and believe the gospel,” as a token of their repentance in the Lord. Worshipers who choose not to come up for the ashes are invited to meditate quietly in their seat. During the rite, special music may be presented.
 - After a moment of silent reflection, this **Absolution Of Sins** is proclaimed by the pastor:
- Ⓟ *You have heard the Word of the Lord, “Repent, and believe the gospel.” With these words, Jesus began his ministry and now directs us to make repentance and hear his good news. Therefore, as you have made repentance, now hear the gospel. I, as a called and ordained servant of Christ, announce to you the grace of God. Your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*
- The final three verses of the **Hymn Jesus, I Will Ponder Now**, are sung by the congregation to the tune *Jesu Kreuz, Leiden Und Pein 76 76 D*:

Grant that I your Passion view with repentant grieving
 Nor you crucify anew by unholy living.
 How could I refuse to shun ev’ry sinful pleasure
 Since for me God’s only Son suffered without measure?

If my sins give me alarm and my conscience grieve me,
 Let your cross my fear disarm, peace of conscience give me.
 Grant that I may faithfully lean upon your Passion.
 If his only Son loves me, God must have compassion.

Grant that I may willingly bear with you my crosses,
 Learning humbleness of you, peace mid pain and losses.
 May I give you love for love! Hear me, O my Savior,
 That I may in heav’n above sing your praise forever.

- The **First Reading**, Jonah 1:1-3, is read:
- Ⓟ *Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.*

- The **Holy Gospel**, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, is read:

Ⓟ *“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

- The **Creed** is offered according to local custom.
- The **Hymn**, *Hark, The Voice Of Jesus Calling*, is sung by the congregation to the tune *Galilean 87 87 D*:

Hark, the voice of Jesus calling, “Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvests waiting, who will bear the sheaves away?”
Loud and long the master calls you; rich reward he offers free.
Who will answer, gladly saying, “Here am I. Send me, send me”?

Let none hear you idly saying, “There is nothing I can do,”
While the multitudes are dying and the master calls for you.
Take the task he gives you gladly; let his work your pleasure be.
Answer quickly when he calls you, “Here am I. Send me, send me!”

- The **Homily**, entitled *The Sign Of Jonah: “God is Calling!”* is delivered by the pastor. Please note that page numbers appear occasionally in the text. These are references to Lessing, *Jonah* [St. Louis, CPH, 2007]. If you wish, you may refer to this Bible commentary for additional background material for the homily:

Ⓟ *(Pantomiming telephone conversation:) “Hello?” (Pause for other end to answer.)*

“You’re kidding! It can’t be!” (Hold phone to your chest as though to keep the person on the other end from hearing and whisper to the congregation ...) “It’s God!”

Now wouldn't it be something if God actually did call?

I don't know how it is at your house, but I find one of the most irritating sentences in the English language to be, "The phone is ringing!" This infuriating announcement usually comes from someone in my home who prefers that I attend to the task of answering the phone. I've actually had the experience of hearing three voices call out at once, "The phone's ringing!"

The idea is that we don't want to waste our energy if the call is not for us, and there are even times when we don't want to answer calls that are for us!

Continuing on with this little "fun with the phone" routine, have you ever answered the phone and then said to your mom or dad or son or daughter or husband or wife, "It's for you." Then the reply comes, "Who is it?" Amazing how many people simply want to avoid responsibility for their calls!

Welcome to the world of Jonah! Let's begin at the beginning! The narrative of Jonah actually begins in 2 Kings 14:23-27 (pp. 64-65):

"In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw that the distress of Israel was very bitter; there was no one left, bond or free, and no one to help Israel. But the Lord had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash."

From this passage, we find that even in Israel, a sinful nation in the sight of God—a nation under the reign of an unfaithful king, Jeroboam, who "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord"—the prophet Jonah was successful: God did not destroy unfaithful Israel while his prophet Jonah was speaking the word of God.

In the book bearing his name, Jonah was also a successful prophet: the people of Nineveh heard and heeded the word of God. They repented.

Yet Jonah, son of Amittai (a name that means "faithful," or "truth"—Jonah was "the son of faithfulness ... the child of truth"), while successful, proves to be anything but faithful. He turns tail and runs when God calls him. And even when he does tell the truth—proclaiming the true word of God to the Ninevites—he does so begrudgingly. Deep down he doesn't want those nasty outsiders to know God's truth. Even so, God's faithful and true word succeeds!

Jonah must have been successful as a prophet in his native Israel. We can figure that out because he was able to hire the sailors and pay for the use of the ship (pp. 76-77). The opening sentences of Jonah's book have him not only paying a fare for his passage, but in fact financing the entire ship and its crew—an expensive endeavor, especially considering all of this money is being spent to disobey the command of the Lord. The last call Jonah wants to answer is that one from the LORD!

Just like other Israelites, Jonah is called to go beyond his borders (p. 82). Abram was sent from his homeland. Moses led God's people from their homes. Balaam was sent to prophesy to Moab. Elijah had been sent to the Gentile town of Zarephath. God's prophets had a history of speaking God's word beyond traditional borders.

But this call was to Nineveh, “the chief of sinners” (pp. 85-89). The very word “Nineveh” would cause a prophet to blanch—such was the city's reputation! Isaiah wrote about it. So did Nahum and Zephaniah. A place of deceit and moral degradation, the nation was also renowned for its bloody and inhumane warfare. When the armies of Nineveh arose (and they arose OFTEN!) the wake of their destruction was utterly complete.

When Assyrians took over a town in battle, they would take any survivors and impale them on stakes in front of the town. After a battle they would pile up the skulls of their enemies making pillars out of them. Their leaders would often remove the heads of their enemies and wear them around their necks. This is not a friendly nation or a friendly city, not exactly on the top ten holiday destinations of the day! In fact this is the nation that eventually invades and destroys Israel in 722 BC (cf. 2 Kings 17). And it's to this group of people, to this great enemy nation, to this enemy city that God calls Jonah to go. That's right, it's an overseas assignment to Kabul in Afghanistan or Tehran in Iran or to Mogadishu in Somalia.

Jonah received a call that he would rather not get! You know the feeling. The phone rings and you just know it is your aging aunt who wants to come over and check her mailbox for the third time today. Or maybe you've had the experience of being “between jobs” and both the car payment and the mortgage are a few days late. You screen your calls with an answering machine; or if you are fortunate you have caller ID!

Calling Jonah to go to the Ninevites was like asking a Jew in 1942 to go from New York to Hitler, and tell him that God loved him, and that everything he did would be forgiven if he would but repent. So the Jew got on a train, all right, and went to San Francisco, then got on a ship to Antarctica! He wanted nothing to do with it.

So Jonah actually hung up on God! Have you ever had someone hang up on you? It doesn't feel very good, and you likely experience a bit of anger. Who in the world would want to hang up on God and make God angry?

The answer is in Jonah's name (pp. 80-81). The name "Jonah" means "dove." When we hear that word we think of peace ... or perhaps an image of the Holy Spirit. That is not what an ancient Hebrew thought when hearing the word "dove." In that culture a dove was a flighty and brainless creature—something not to be trusted ... unreliable. A dove flies from one place to another, avoiding confrontation ... seeking refuge ... and then moaning and lamenting when in distress. Sound familiar? Like flighty, moaning Jonah, perhaps?

So Jonah, the dove, flies off, boarding a ship going to Tarshish, which is not only Tarsus, the hometown of St. Paul (p. 72), but represents a pleasant place of security, a "distant paradise" (p. 73). Tarshish was on important trade routes, and was recognized as a place of gold and gems. Imagine what the Spaniards thought about the new world—a place of exotic Aztec gold—and you'll have an idea of Jonah's image of distant Tarshish.

That having been said, a ship bound for Tarshish is bound to have enormous problems (cf. p. 76). Scripture speaks of the ships of Tarshish being buffeted by winds and shattering. Boarding a ship to Tarshish would be akin to buying a ticket to the Titanic!

Jonah's "going down" (v. 3) begins a slow decent toward death (p. 74). The author of Jonah uses the term "to go down" several times. Jonah is descending—heading toward the bottom of the sea and the belly of the fish. The foreshadowing is ominous! Jonah is headed for a fall, for "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk. 14:11).

And this is what happens when we run from God's call on our lives. In the Bible, "to stand before the Lord" is equivalent to serving him (e.g., 1 Kings 17:1; 18:15). The opposite, "to be removed or to flee from God's presence," is to refuse to serve him. It can also denote the idea of being removed from his service (e.g., Gen. 4:16). The person who therefore "runs away from the LORD" or "flees from the presence of the LORD" is the one who is refusing to serve God in the task he knows he has been called to do. This is what Jonah is doing—he is refusing to serve God, even though he knows what his word says (cf. 75-74). As a prophet, Jonah should have longed to be in God's presence (as David so often yearned for God's presence). But Jonah hid from God's presence. It is like Jonah was on Mission Impossible, and he smashed the message device instead of accepting the mission!

But God's word will have its way (pp. 77-78). The book of Jonah begins with God's word. It ENDS with God's word, as well. In the words of Martin Luther, God's word forever shall abide!

How will God's word win the day? The answer is in another prophet's name—Jesus. He willingly goes beyond his borders (p. 82) for us! Jesus often traveled beyond traditional and expected boundaries—meeting with Samaritan women ... touching lepers illegally. Is that a surprise, considering Jesus traveled past the boundaries of heaven to be born, to live and to die among us, a foreign and rebellious people? In his resurrection from the dead the boundaries between life and

death will be forever broken down. Jesus, the one who saves, is the boundary breaker. He will not flutter away from God's will. He will heed God's call, for he IS the living Word of God.

Listen, God is calling again. He is calling us to confess our sin. But all the more he is calling us to confess the name of Jesus. This is our path home from our wandering. He is our hope of survival!

(Here you may wish to have a cell phone begin to ring as a surprise reminder of the beginning of the homily.)

Amen.

- The **Offering** is gathered, during which time a hymn or other special music of your own choosing may be offered.
- These **Prayers** are offered by the pastor and an additional voice:

P *Dear Lord, Jonah tried to flee from your grace as he said later, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love." (Jonah 4:2) As we begin this Lenten season, we turn to your Son, Jesus and thank you for your grace for seeking us every time we run from your call on our lives. Together with John the Baptist, we say,*

I *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"! (John 1:29)*

P *Father, we turn to your Son in repentance and sorrow for the countless times we have been deaf to your call. As we begin this Lenten season with ashes, renew us to focus on Jesus and remember his salvation, for by his holy cross he has redeemed the world. We remember his words, for they are our light. We remember his works, for they are our example. We remember his grace, for it is ours to receive. We remember his glory, for it is the brilliance of you, Father. We remember his pain, for it was not deserved. We remember his sorrow, for it was for our hardness of heart. We remember his life, for it was perfect before you, Father. We remember his death, for it was ours.*

I *Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

P *Lord, Jesus, as we begin this Lenten season and follow Jonah to Nineveh and follow you to the cross, help us to devote ourselves to your call. In your name we pray.*

I *Amen.*

- The **Lord's Prayer** is offered. Or, if **Holy Communion** is celebrated, it may take place here.
- The **Blessing** is pronounced by the pastor:

P *The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you his peace. Your God is calling you to spread his word. Amen.*

- The **Closing Hymn**, *Abide With Me*, is sung by the congregation to the tune *Eventide 10 10 10 10*:

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

- These **Study Prompts** may be distributed to the congregation:

Read Jonah 1:4-16.

1. Even when God, in his grace, has sought me, how have I dug in my heels, refusing to hearken to him?
2. How has my acting in such a fashion caused trouble for others?
3. How was Jonah's sacrifice similar to, as well as different from, that of Christ's sacrifice on the cross?