

**Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church**  
**Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena**

**January 25, 2009**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

<sup>1</sup>The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup>So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

**Mark 1:14-20**

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**"In Alignment"**

**I have always been a CBS person. I have been watching CBS since Walter Cronkite. Lately I'm thinking I may need to branch out and consider other networks; there is something about that Katie Courick that just gets to me. I know that producers write the majority of the stuff, but**

it is that moment when she is on her own that just doesn't quite work for me.

The other day, I watched the Inaugural events. Like most Americans who were not on the national mall the other day, we watched from the comfort of our warm rooms. I watched the live video stream on the computer and then eventually made my way to a real television as the time of the actual inaugural event happened.

I thought it was an excellent speech. It was a good balance. It was a cheerleader and visionary moment in our history. No matter what side of the aisle you sit on you cannot help but be awed by this moment in our history when it feels like we have come a long way since the 60's. This has been a historic moment and we were here to see it.

The speech was crafted in such a way that what I heard loud and clear was that we need to pull together in ways that the American people have always been able to do. In that pulling together we need to work together and have the vision and the foresight that the founders had about liberty and justice.

In addition to calling us all to task and to service as American people, President Obama spoke to the world about our continuing resolve to both defend freedom and promote it here on our streets and globally. It called us all to come together and to re-gain our focus and our purpose on the greater good of pursuing this life, liberty, and happiness.

When he concluded his speech, Katie Courick's comment was: "I don't know about this speech. There were no crescendo moments." There were no crescendo moments—what was that for a comment? I don't know about CBS anymore?

I believe, he had it in alignment. Yes, in alignment. He did not go on about how great he was going to be as a president or bash the last

**administration. No. Instead, he sought to address us all as citizens. He gathered us together. He urged us to work for the common good. He called us to keep the vision. He summoned the power of staying focused.**

**I call that alignment. He brought a common vision into alignment.**

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**Alignment is a great word. I can tell when my car is out of alignment. When I drive someone else's car one of the first things I can feel is whether or not it is in alignment.**

**I learned a hard lesson about alignment years ago. 20 plus years ago already I learned that if you do not keep your car in alignment you can ruin your tires. In fact, if you drive with your car out of alignment it is as if the wheels are fighting with themselves and eventually it impacts negatively on your tires.**

**After going too long with your alignment out of whack the tires eventually become cupped. Quiet literally, the surface of the tire becomes worn in a way that quickly expends the useful life of the tire. It really wears the tire in a way that exhausts it long before it should be worn.**

**The car that is out of alignment will tug and pull in such a way that the driver has to over steer in order to keep the car going on the road in a productive way. The car that is out of alignment will use up its recourses and it will cause costly repairs.**

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**Alignment is an issue not only for our cars but for our walk of faith and our relationship with Jesus. Are we in alignment? That is the question. Are we in alignment?**

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**Jonah was out of alignment.**

**God's call on his life was very clear. God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and proclaim the word of the Lord to the people there. Jonah was not interested in doing what God called him to do. For sure Jonah was convinced that the people of Nineveh did not even deserve to hear the word of the Lord.**

**Jonah was so convinced of his position that when God called him to go to Nineveh, Jonah headed in the other direction. Jonah headed to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh. God was very clear with Jonah what Jonah should do. Jonah was very clear that he was not going to do it.**

**Jonah was out of alignment. He was out of alignment with the call of God on his life. He was so out of alignment that he ran away. He ran away and there was that whole incident with the belly of the whale. Talk about ending up where you would not want to end up—and then to get vomited up too. Not fun.**

**Eventually Jonah relents and he goes and he proclaims the word of the Lord to the people in Nineveh. And the people in Nineveh respond. Jonah was so convinced that they would not respond. He was so convinced and so dead set against those people that when they responded instead of being happy he was angry. It had not gone the way he wanted it to go.**

**He was out of alignment. He was out of alignment with the call of God on his life. He was running away from that call—and it did not work.**

**Are you running away? We all do this. Where is God calling us to lead? What next is God calling us to do that we don't feel ready for or we don't feel equipped for? What is God calling us to do that we would rather not do?**

**What is it? What way of serving others? What way of sharing your faith? What is it in your living that is not working that God wants you to change and you are running from it?**

**Where is it that you are out of alignment?**

**Face up to it. Pray on that. Pray for a whole week on nothing else. Make it a season of prayer. What is it that you need to get in alignment? How is it that you need to get in alignment with the will of God? Pray on that for a whole week.**

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**Jonah was out of alignment. But Peter and Andrew, James and John—they were in alignment.**

**There they are, in the boat doing what they do. They are fishing. They are busy casting their nets and making a living to provide for their families. And Jesus comes along and interrupts them. He invites them to follow him and soon rather than fishing for fish he tells them they will be fishing for people.**

**And they go. The gospel writer here is very clear with the language. Immediately is the word he uses. Immediately they drop their nets, abandon their boats and follow Jesus. James and John when they respond even leave behind their father in the boat who was working with them in mending the nets.**

**How could they do that? How could they just get up and walk away from their responsibilities? How could they just get up and leave old Zebedee in the boat to fend for himself while they follow Jesus? How could they do that?**

**Because, to do that was in alignment. It was in alignment with the call of God on their lives. It was in alignment with what they were**

supposed to be doing. It was in alignment with kind of relationship that Jesus wanted to have with them and the work that Jesus had for them to do. It was, to use a worldly word—it was their destiny.

It was in alignment with what God wanted for them. To do anything else was to deny the person that they were created to be. It would have been far easier for them to stay where they were doing what they had always done than to make a deep shift of this sort. Yet, there was that something—that Spirit of God—that was in them that called them to make this change and they knew it was right.

They knew that to leave behind the fishing and begin fishing for people with Jesus was the right decision. They knew it because they were in alignment.

You see you know it too. It is in you. You can feel when you are in alignment with the call of God on your life. You can feel when you are in alignment with where God wants you to be and what God wants you to do.

I dare say that for us to live in alignment we do not have to abandon our posts of doing the work we do in the place where we are doing it. BUT, we had better be keenly listening for that call of God that calls us out and calls us to do what is next for the benefit of God...because to do so is to live in alignment.

There is inside of us this confidence that comes from living in alignment, and we can trust that. Our lives headed in the right direction—that does not mean there aren't bumps and struggles as there will always be those—but our lives are headed in the right direction. There is clarity of purpose there.

**Are you headed where you are supposed to be going? Not where you choose, but where God chooses for you? Are you moving in that way? Are you in alignment with following Jesus where Jesus so wants you to go?**

**Are you living the way Jesus so wants you to live? All the other stuff—leave it behind. It does not matter. You do not need it. Leave it behind. Follow. Just follow Jesus where Jesus wants you to go. That is when you are living in alignment.**

**Just follow Jesus. Amen.**