

Jonah 3:1-5, 10ⁱⁱ

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." 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. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. 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.

ⁱⁱ About the First Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Especially after the exile, many Jews clung to a rigid nationalistic mindset that elevated their identity as God's chosen people. As such, they felt they had an exclusive claim on God's mercy. Jonah embodied this attitude, evident in his reluctance to go to Nineveh and his great disappointment with God's decision to have mercy on the city.

Today's reading tells of Jonah's obedience to God's second call. As the capital city of Assyria, Nineveh not only posed a political danger, its "wickedness" (1:2) jeopardized Israel's spiritual welfare. The evil of the city and its inhabitants makes even more surprising the belief and repentance with which they respond to the message of this Israelite.