

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, oh God, my strength and my joy... Amen.

As you all just experienced, during the VBS recap, St. John really knows how to make a splash with the kids. And I was blessed to come hang out at VBS, this past June, before I started my call here.

And from the second I walked in the door; the entire space was transformed, kind of like it is now, into an under the sea paradise.

All were invited to not only hear the word of God, that was read by Mr. Tim, but all were invited to experience it in their bodies, and to use their imaginations.

For example, the story of Jonah, was transformed into a real-life experience when we migrated from the S.S. VBS Ship, into the giant belly of a fish.

We crawled through a black tarp and sat in anticipation as Mr. Tim continued where we left off today on Jonah's journey. Here we heard the fish's heartbeat, and then with a loud burping noise, we evacuated the fish.

Now, this is just a snippet from what was experienced that week, to share with you the creativity and the imagination that went into preparing this time, so that the kids could experience God in different ways.

And this is so important. Because so much of who God is, is beyond our imagination and understanding.

And that is what this theological, whale of a tale, story of Jonah is all about. The story is not meant to focus on whether it is possible to live in a fish for three days or not.

The book of Jonah is an embellishment, a satire, and is so out there to show that God's love and God's actions exceed our imagination.

The book of Jonah is filled with plot twists and with characters behaving opposite of how one might expect. And it ends showing God's love for all humanity.

Which, in theory, is a beautiful thing. Except when you think about the people you really don't like, the people you might identify as Ninevites.

Now that can be a hard pill to swallow... And Jonah was so upset over this, he cried out in anger and frustration because God was merciful and loving to a group of people who persecuted and hurt his own people.

And I think, we can all relate to this frustration towards others, on one level or another.

Especially right now, with all of the many, many negative political adds buzzing around...It is so unfortunate, but it seems the common practice has become candidate bashing brought to you by one party against other.

And it really makes me wonder what kind of world this is creating...

As it is through relationship that we experience life together. And yes, some relationships need to end if they are toxic and not rooted in God's love...

But the majority of relationships should not embody such disrespect and hatred simply because of differing views. As those are the relationships that need the breath of God's nurturing love and grace to transform them.

Transformation, like Jonah begrudgingly brought to Nineveh.

Yet despite Jonah's frustration, anger and disobedience...

God never left Jonah...

Instead, God journeyed with him and even met him right where he was at... And in those turbulent seas, Jonah was provided a very strange way out.

Revealing that if God journeys with stubborn Jonah, God journeys with you.

Through all your emotions and frustrations. God is there guiding you and providing you with hope for the journey, even if it is through a proverbial belly of a fish.

Because God works in ways that are beyond our imagination.

Just like we heard in the gospel today... After fishing all night, the disciples caught nothing. And in the morning Jesus appeared and told the disciples, to cast their net to the right side of the boat.

And there, beyond their imaginations, the disciples caught a net so full of fish, they could not even haul it in.

Now this is all great for the disciples, but what does this mean to you, when you find yourself with an empty net?

On the days you find yourself desperately treading water because there is simply too much to do.

Or when the rain won't let up, and the storm is closing in.

Or when you feel stuck in a boat, hungry and thirsting for something more than what you have been living on.

Or when you are trying to change to do something different, but as hard as you paddle you can't seem to get anywhere because the current against you is just too strong...

Remember who has come down to the Lakeshore. And know it is okay to abandon your small boat.

As there are seas beyond your imagination that God is waiting to share with you.

So, splash about from time to time. And let the leak spring in your boat. For God will meet you where you are at and provide a way to dry land, even if it is in the most unimaginable place, in the cramped belly of a fish... Amen.