

July 9, 2017
Summer Sermon Series
“Beaches of the Bible: Jonah’s Beach”

First Reading ~ Jonah: 2

Then YHWH sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and he remained in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights. From the belly of the fish he prayed to YHWH, and said:

Out of my despair I cried to you
and you answered me;
from the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
You threw me into the Deep,
into the heart of the sea,
and floods overwhelmed me;
all your waves and your billows
washed over me.
And I said, ‘I am banished from your sight!
Will I ever again look upon your holy temple?’
The waters closed in over me;
the Deep surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.
I sank down to the roots of the mountains;
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
But you raised my life back up from the Pit,
YHWH my God!
As my life, my soul, was ebbing away,
I remembered YHWH, my God,
and my prayer came to you,
in your holy Temple.
Those who worship vain idols,
who cling to worthless idols
and worship fake gods
forsake their true loyalty.
But I will sacrifice to you
with a song of thanksgiving;
I will fulfill the vow I made.
Deliverance comes from YHWH!”

Then YHWH spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the beach.

Second Reading ~ *From Parker Palmer in Let Your Life Speak: The Voice of Vocation*

Most of us arrive at a sense of self and vocation only after a long journey through alien lands. But this journey bears no resemblance to the trouble-free “travel

packages” sold by the tourism industry. It is more akin to the ancient tradition of pilgrimage — “a transformative journey to a sacred center” full of hardships, darkness, and peril.

In the tradition of the pilgrimage, those hardships are seen not as accidental but as integral to the journey itself. Treacherous terrain, bad weather, taking a fall, getting lost — challenges of that sort, largely beyond our control, can strip the ego of the illusion that it is in charge and make space for true self to emerge. If that happens, the pilgrim has a better chance to find the sacred center he or she seeks. Disabused of our illusions by much travel and travail, we awaken one day to find that the sacred center is here and now — in every moment of the journey, everywhere in the world around us, and deep within our own hearts.