

# January 31, 2020

## Epiphany 4



## Stuff Happens, Things Change

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Preaching

### First Reading ~ *Jonah 3:1-5, 10*

The word of YHWH came a second time to Jonah: "Get up, go to the great city of Nineveh, that great city, and preach to them as I told you to do." Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of YHWH. Nineveh was a city large beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Only forty days more, and Nineveh is going to be destroyed!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God's mind was changed about the calamity that had been intended for them and did it not.

### Second Reading ~ *adapted from Father Richard Rohr*

Jesus' primary metaphor for the mystery of transformation is the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:39, 16:4; Luke 11:29). Jesus tells the growing crowds, "It is an evil and adulterous generation that wants a sign" (Luke 11:29), and he then says the only sign he will give is the sign of Jonah. As a Jew, Jesus knew well the graphic story of Jonah the prophet who was running from God and was used by God almost in spite of himself. Jonah was swallowed by a whale and taken where he would rather not go. This was Jesus' metaphor for death and rebirth. Rather than look for impressive apparitions or miracles, Jesus said we must go inside the belly of the whale for a while. Then and only then will we be spit up on a new shore and understand our call, our place, and our purpose.

### Third Reading ~ *Hazel Henderson*

If we can recognize that change and uncertainty are basic principles, we can greet the future and the transformation we are undergoing with the understanding that we do not know enough to be pessimistic.