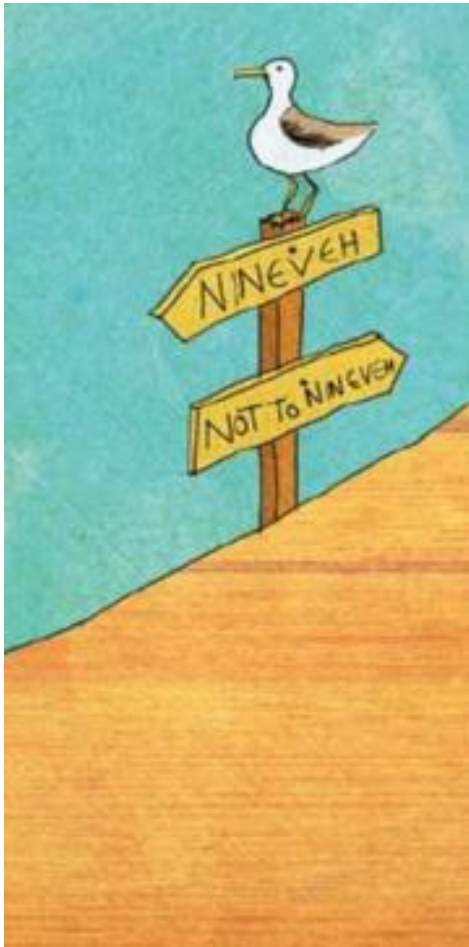


JONAH: A Long Obedience



Jonah is sent by God to speak to the foreign nation of Assyria. They are on a brutal march to world domination.

He runs away in the exact opposite direction but is stopped by God and given a three day time-out to consider what he will do next.

The Whale: an Accidental Hero

- Just as distressed as Jonah!
- Notice: She does not floss her teeth or deep clean her gullet before taking him on board. Offers what she has, as she is.
- She keeps swimming even with him on board.
- She doesn't show him off.

- She holds Jonah safely for as long as it took for him to get clear with God.
- She does not coach or advise, just creates a safe space.
- When he is ready, she sends him on his way. It is his journey, not hers.

What if a primary work of the church is to be a whale?

Jonah 2:10

“Then God spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on the seashore.” *(The Message)*

Jonah 3:1-3

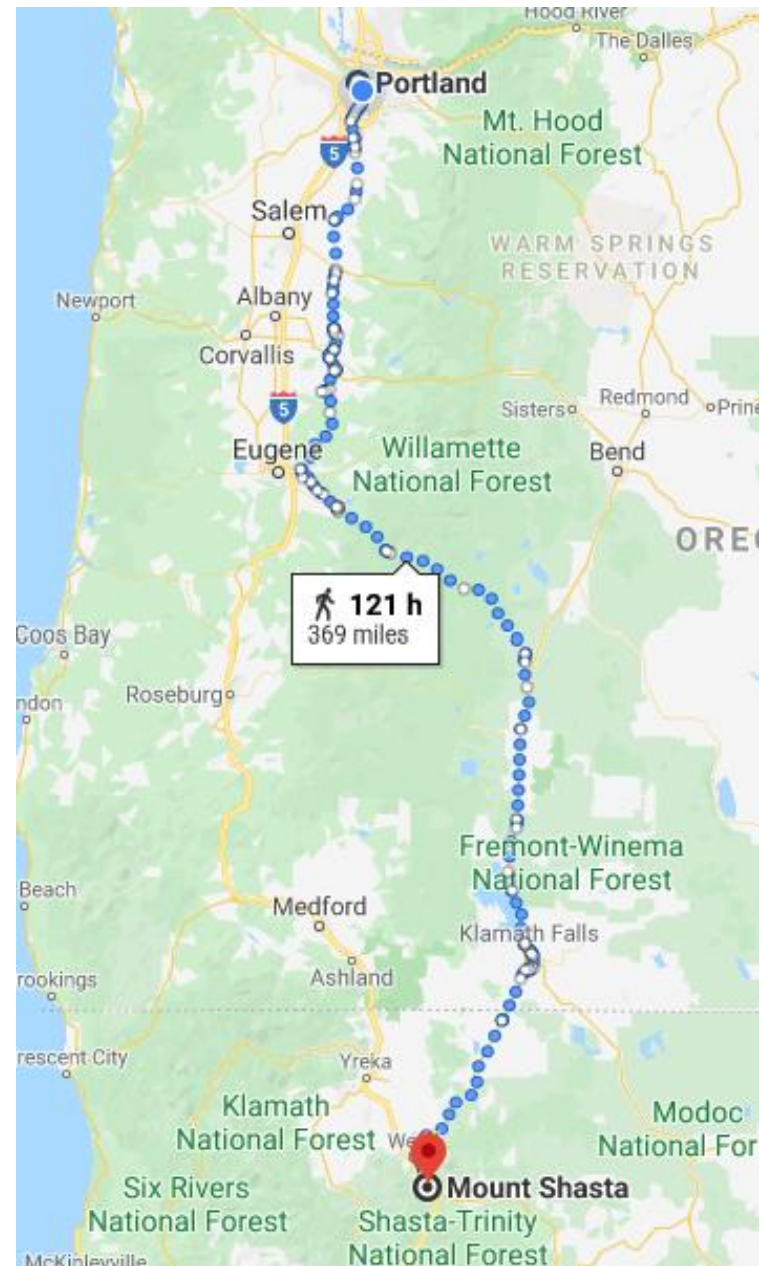
“A message from the Lord came to Jonah a second time. The Lord said, “Go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you.” This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying God’s orders to the letter.”

If Jonah reached shore at the *closest* possible Mediterranean port to Nineveh, it would have been at Latakia, Syria. 375 miles.



375 miles is the distance from Portland to Mount Shasta.

At a minimum, it is a **121** hour walk, although through desert, not National Parks.



Every single day of that journey, Jonah again chose to go to Nineveh.

He has all the same fears he started out with. Assyria is still a fearful, dreaded enemy.

There are countless distractions, detours. Lots of “anywhere but Nineveh” to run to.

He has daily opportunities to quit.

And I believe that if Jonah finally sat down in the desert and refused to move, God would have sent someone else to Nineveh.

God would have searched out another faithful person and prepared them to take the message.

It would have taken longer. It would certainly have been different than if Jonah had agreed to go, but God can work in Assyria without Jonah.

If he chooses to say no, Jonah is the one who will miss out.

God will always find a way to work without us if we choose not to participate. We are not essential to the work of God except as God chooses to use us.

But the work of God is essential to us. It is as we participate in the work God is doing in this world that we come to know and to love God most deeply.

The question is not, "How much will it cost me to take up my pack and hike to Nineveh?"

The question is, "How much will it cost me if I don't?"

Jonah KNOWS the answer to that question!

So day by day, step by step, Jonah makes his way to Nineveh.

All of us will find ourselves on the road to Nineveh at some point.

- On a journey we didn't choose,
- to destination we didn't choose,
- under conditions we didn't choose.

Some of us are on the road to Nineveh right now--

Remember that God is with you now and is already at work ahead of you.

Keep going. Tie on your sandals, pick up your pack, take the next step.

Look for whales.

Be a whale.