

# FAITH CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

13820 Seal Beach Blvd

PO Box 3444

Seal Beach, Ca 90740

Rev. Gwyn & Ginny Vaughn, Lead Pastors

Rev. Sheri Leming, Executive Pastor – Gary Leming, Business Administrator

Church Phone 562-598-9010

GV2fca@aol.com

[www.fcachurch.net](http://www.fcachurch.net)

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## HOW SHALL I ENTER GOD’S HOUSE

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Ps. 100:4*

***From childhood I have known this Psalm.*** It was one of the first passages of Scripture along with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm that I memorized. But even as I approach my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, it has proven a blessing to me. This Psalm calls for the true believer to come into the presence of God with an upbeat attitude with such phrases as: “make a **joyful** noise; serve...with **gladness**; come...with **singing**; enter into His gates with **thanksgiving**; praise, be **thankful**; **bless** his name.”

Some theologians have stated that this Psalm was used when peace offerings were being offered up to the Lord (Lev. 7:11). Others think that this was something that Joshua, the son of Nun, offered up when he made the war with the Ammonites to cease. But I am convinced that this Psalm should be offered up most often when we gather as a body of people to worship in God’s house because it establishes for us an example as to our manner of conduct when we enter the Lord’s house.

God’s people should not need to be primed or stimulated by a song leader to worship. They should be ready when they enter into God’s house inspired to worship the Lord with gladness of heart. Of course when the day of worship starts I realize that getting ready for church can have hassles of its own. Even the drive there can create tensions of its own. But when we enter upon the church grounds we find ourselves on holy ground and we should immediately sense that in our spirit and souls and say with the writer. *“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”* Ps. 118:24

### WHAT A MINOR PROPHET SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN

Much of my time has been spent in the past several weeks in reading from the Minor Prophets. Those who have been attending our services know that we spent time in sharing from the Books of Malachi, Micah, and Joel. But among them I could have shared other books which are equally most informative and helpful to study. Among them is the Book of Jonah. This man had a hard time being thankful. Even in the height, probably of his greatest success, he still fails in learning the lesson of thanksgiving.

***It makes me wonder what it would have taken to make him thankful.*** Especially after having been saved from drowning after his traveling companions on board the ship he was sailing threw him overboard. They did that after he admitted that he was probably the one responsible for the storm they were experiencing on the high seas because of his disobedience to God’s command when he told him to go to Nineveh to warn the people there of the impending judgment. Most of you probably know the story...but if you don’t I hope you take the time to read this short book in the Old Testament.

***After Jonah had been thrown overboard he discovered that God had prepared a fish for his rehabilitation and restoration.*** Who would have imagined such a thing to happen? However, God has rescued many of us out of strange situations which are about as fantastic as Jonah’s experience. After all, if you are rescued what does it really matter if the story is believable or not...as long as we know it to be true and are rescued. Let others doubt our story if they want. We know the truth and that is all that matters. Jonah could never have doubted that God had rescued him. But what concerned God and should concern us is this: How could he have such a dramatic deliverance and not want the same for the people of Nineveh? Maybe he felt that as a Hebrew he had a “right” to be delivered and that the people of Nineveh didn’t. None of us deserve such blessings. Lam. 3:22

## LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF JONAH

A whole chapter in the Book of Jonah is devoted to the kind of prayer he prayed while still in the belly of the “great fish” that God had provided for his restoration. Jonah tells us that it was while he was “*fainting away*” (Jonah 2:7) that he “remembered the Lord.” I think that was a good place to start the restoration program. Because it was from there that he said “*I called out of my distress to the Lord.*” Now this demonstrates his state of mind.

***But let me point out his description of his conditions when he prayed this prayer.*** He said that the “*waters encompassed me to point of death*” which to me meant he was **drowning**. Then he tells us that “*the deep (sea) engulfed me*” or **he felt surrounded** on every side by water; no escape. And then he sank into the **depths** of the sea “*to the roots of the mountains.*” And to add to his problem, “*weeds were wrapped around my head (neck)*” In other words the weeds were “choking him to death.” It is then the idea came... “I think it is time to pray.” It was then that he said: “*I called out of my distress to the Lord.*”

***It is amazing how much it takes to get some of us on our knees to pray.*** Some people must get in such a desperate situation as I have described Jonah was in when he finally called upon the Lord. He wouldn't pray on board the ship when everybody else was praying (Jonah 1:6) so God allowed him to be put in a place that would bring him to that state of desperation that made him willing to pray.

**Now please notice his prayer:** “*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*” Jonah 2:8, 9

***First, Jonah implied that he had been trusting “lying vanities” and in doing so forsook the provision of mercy that God had always provided.*** What were his lying vanities? What are they in our life? I believe they are anything in which we trust other than God. We end up deceiving ourselves. In Jonah's case it was the deceitful promise of his own will and his own way, as opposed to God's; and not only had he found that God was stronger than he, but he had been brought to see and confess that in such a course he had been his own worst enemy.

***Secondly, this realization brought him to repentance and a pledge to be obedient to his call.*** But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. The prophet's prayer ends almost in promising the same as the mariners. They “made vows;” Jonah says, “*I will pay that, that I have vowed.*” In other words, he brought himself back in harmony with God and his plan and he did this with much thanksgiving.

## THE POSTSCRIPT IN CHAPTER THREE

**There is a postscript to this story and that is why we have chapter three.** It is not a good ending because after Jonah did what he was told with great success I might add, he returned to the same rebellious spirit that got him in trouble in the first place as we see him arguing with the wisdom of God.

***You see, the story never ends, because we are still flesh and blood even after we have been redeemed.*** This is probably the reason why we have these episodes in our life where we need renewal, rehabilitation, and “*whales which almost drown* us, who carry us to the depths of despair, and almost choke the very life out of us, but for God's mercy which are “new every morning, great is His faithfulness.” This is why we need to have a time of thanksgiving often in our daily life....to bring us back in harmony with God's will.

***We must never forget how Jonah got out of the fish.*** “*And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*” Jonah 2:10 Isn't it nice of God to make the fish drop Jonah on dry ground. He could have let him off away from the shoreline and let him swim himself out of the mess. But God didn't. God provided Jonah a “dry” land spot. And I believe he wants to do the same for us. ***Maybe today or next week you will need a “dry landing spot.”*** Remember what God commands whether it be man, beasts, or fish of the sea, they must all be obedient to the voice of God. Even Christ's own disciples were amazed at this power. “Who is this?” they asked, “He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.” Luke 8:25 Oh, let us give him praise for His wonderful works for man. Amen.