

Classis Huron Sermon Evaluation: “The Angry Prophet and the Compassionate God” by Jack Tacoma

This imaginative and compelling sermon deals with the entire book of Jonah. It creatively represents the material of the book as if it were a four part television mini-series using vivid, descriptive language and even imagining how a movie camera might capture the action of the book in real time.

The sermon is carefully crafted and reflects the expertise of a gifted communicator. Rich descriptions of the landscape and characters in the biblical narrative will likely appeal both to visual learners able to imagine the scenes in their mind and auditory learners who enjoy the use of poetic devices. Jack does more than just retell the story in this sermon though; he wisely makes connections to the rest of scripture and, importantly, sees the gospel story of salvation in this Old Testament book of prophecy. This is evident in places like page two where he notes how, after throwing Jonah overboard, the sailors realize that “through the death of one man they have been saved”. This kind of salvation theme appears in several places in the book of Jonah and Jack acknowledges this in his sermon.

An important component of every meaningful sermon is practical application. Jack does not miss the opportunity to apply the lessons of the book of Jonah to his listeners. He wisely connects Jonah's anger at God's compassion on the Ninevites with the anger that many Canadians are feeling over recent discoveries and events. He also addresses the more general anger that lurks in most of us in sinister ways that can reveal itself unexpectedly. We can all learn from how Jonah's anger is met with God's mercy and compassion.

This sermon is likely to be understood and well-received by most listeners. There are some, though, who might be put off by the reframing of the book of Jonah as a television mini-series or who might not appreciate the descriptive, imaginative nature of the retelling. This is a risk that every preacher faces; certain approaches inevitably will work better with some more than others. Nevertheless, we both deeply appreciated this sermon.

In addition to reviewing this sermon we also reviewed five service evaluations from others who heard Jack preach it in person. All five of the evaluations were positive in nature. Hence, we heartily recommend that Jack Tacoma's license to exhort be renewed.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Brian Bork – Waterloo Campus Ministry

Rev. Andrew de Gelder – Palmerston CRC