

December 16

wednesday

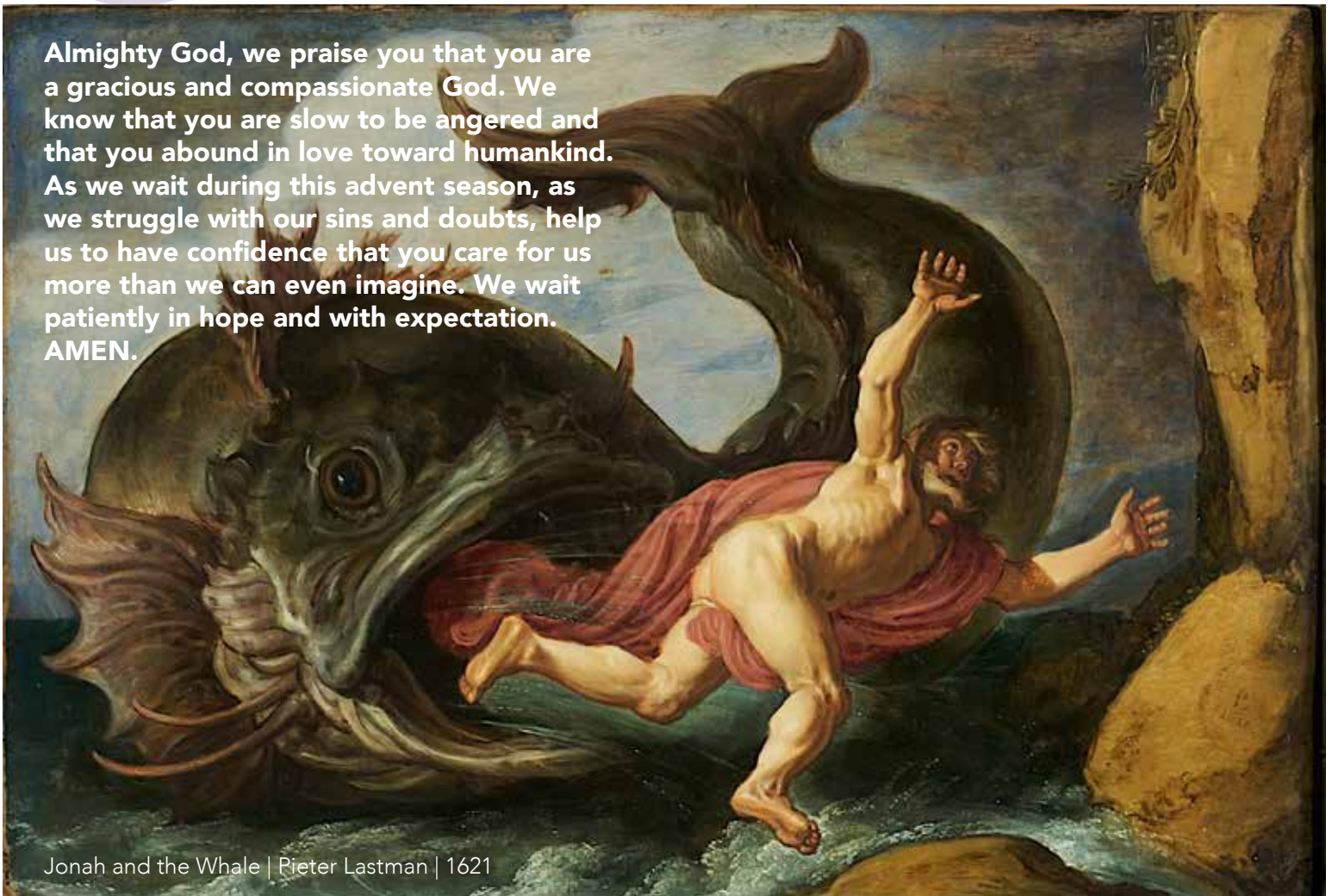
Jonah 3.1-4, 4

What can a wayward prophet like Jonah teach us about advent? During this season of the church year, we are waiting to celebrate again the coming of Jesus, born of Mary, to earth. Although some Jews were expectantly awaiting God to intervene on earth through a messiah in those days, for most it was a distant hope. But they should have remembered how God cared for His people—time and time again He acted on their behalf, keeping His promises.

Jonah knew what God was like, not only because of what he had been taught, but also by what he saw God do in Nineveh: "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." Jonah was angry—really angry—that God was gracious to people who he believed didn't deserve His compassion. Jonah's perspective was that only faithful Jews deserve to experience God's love. God is always full of surprises. The first advent was filled with "the undeserving" hearing the gracious Good News and seeing it unfold before them—shepherds from the fields, wise men (non-Jews from the East). Our God who abounds in love was blessing undeserving people at Jesus' first advent. In the same way, as we patiently wait for our Lord Jesus to come again, God is eager to bless us—undeserving, sometimes angry, often self-centered people—by showing us grace. He alone can fill our hearts with the life changing compassion we so desperately need.

Bill Henderson

Almighty God, we praise you that you are a gracious and compassionate God. We know that you are slow to be angered and that you abound in love toward humankind. As we wait during this advent season, as we struggle with our sins and doubts, help us to have confidence that you care for us more than we can even imagine. We wait patiently in hope and with expectation. AMEN.



Jonah and the Whale | Pieter Lastman | 1621