

## Day 2 Reflection

# James McCallum



Twice now this summer, I've been told the story of Jonah. The first was during the Montreat youth conference; the second, Sunday morning at Port Loyola Baptist Church in Belize City.

Everyone remembers the part about Jonah's being eaten by the giant fish – or, as most of us learned growing up, the whale – but I tend to forget why God was angry with Jonah.

God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh, and Jonah took off in the opposite direction.

As so often happens, when God has other plans for us, things didn't work out the way Jonah expected. Our good friend Ian Gillett, pastor of PLBC, compared that story with that of Isaiah, who in contrast said, "Here I am! Send me!"

I have to confess, the first trip I made to Belize with SVPC three years ago, I was trying to be an Isaiah on the outside, but inside was far more Jonah. The SVPC missionaries have been far braver on this trip.

Whether it was four of our youth – Scott Dillon, Natalie Hogue, and my daughters, Jane and Lizzie – hopping up on stage to sing an impromptu version of "Prince of Peace" during the church service this morning, new friends and old participating in the Sunday School parade in Belize City, or facepainting and crafts and sports at Hattieville Baptist Church, this bunch has been full-on Isaiah.

That's not to say that everything is different. One of the most fascinating things about coming to Port Loyola is that it reinforces just how much Christians everywhere have in common. On Sunday, we were taught an excellent Sunday School lesson by Sister Debbie; we prayed, sang, laughed and cried during the worship service; and had a big, satisfying Sunday lunch.

One PLBC member said to me, "You know, we're the type of church who can be here an hour for Sunday School and two hours for church, and we still end up with an hour of fellowship after everything's over." I said that sounded like us at home. We both agreed that means we're doing it right.

In my admittedly limited experience, one of the seemingly paradoxical things about mission trips is that no matter how hard I work, I feel like I get more out of them than I put into them. Though we're only a day in to this trip, I can already tell this is going to that way for everyone.

It's humbling how welcome we are made to feel by the congregation at Port Loyola, and, truthfully, we have reached a point where we are truly congregations who love each other.

For some of us, this is almost a homecoming, a chance to see old friends and continue the relationship started between our churches six years ago. For others, it's a brand new experience, but one that has already had tremendous rewards.

It's amazing to see how much of an impact our church members have on this community just by being themselves. It's incredible to see our missionaries getting out of our comfort zones and growing in our faith by interacting with the Port Loyola Congregation.

We are also learning some interesting things things about each other. Wellslee Hall is a fantastic face painter. Ansley Othersen can balance a full Nalgene water bottle on her head. Zane O'Mara has an impressive knowledge of Saturday Night Live trivia, and we know what the craft ladies would look like if they were to grow goatees.

Mostly, we've learned we make a great team .

As they say at PLBC, we have come as we are, and will leave better.