

9-15-24 Jonah

Week 1

Text: Jonah 1:1–16

Big Idea of the Message: Jonah rejects God’s call to preach to the city of Nineveh and finds himself floating in a sea of regret.

Application Point: Don’t try to outrun God’s purpose for your life; it is futile and often costly for you and for those around you.

Today we begin a journey through a unique book of the Old Testament. Over the next four weeks I want us to take a journey together through the book of Jonah.

Jonah can be called a unique book for several reasons.

1. One reason is that the book is more about the prophet himself than his message; also, in the book of Jonah we have four miracles in the four short chapters.
 - We have the miracle of the storm, the calming of the storm, the great fish, and the growth of the plant.
2. The book also presents some unique challenges. Liberal scholars attack the book on the basis that a person could not live in the belly of a sea creature along with the questioning the other miracles of the book.
3. Is Jonah a real person, is the book history or some sort of literary device to make a point?
 - We have a couple of points in the bible that verifies that Jonah was a real person and that Jonah’s ordeal was real history.
 - Jesus speaks of Jonah’s ordeal in **Matthew 12:39-41** and in **2 Kings 14:25**, we are told that Jonah prophesied during the reign of king Jeroboam who was the king of Israel at the time.
4. Jonah was given a mission by God to go to the city of Nineveh to try to get the city to change its evil ways.
 - The message was simple, **“In forty-days Nineveh will be destroyed.”**
5. When I read the book of Jonah, I wonder why God gave us a book that is about the life of a prophet instead of his work.
 - My conclusion is that God has some lessons for us to learn from the life of Jonah. Keep your eyes open and allow the Holy Spirit to show you the Ninevah’s in your life.
 - It is easy to get caught up in the miracles in the book of Jonah and miss the lesson that God has in store for us.

Read Jonah 1:1-3.

1. **God’s direction for you is most likely a direction you don’t or won’t want to go.**
 - God said, “Go!” But Jonah said, “No!”
 - Twice we read that Jonah fled **“from the presence of the Lord.”** Jonah didn’t just say no, he went in the opposite direction. Ninevah was 500 miles northeast from him, and he decided to go 2500 miles to the west.

- Down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the sea, and down into the great fish. Disobedience always leads downward.
- Jonah was to go to Ninevah and “**cry out against it...**” The sin’s, sinful lifestyle and wickedness was on display before God and He was going to destroy them in 40 days.
- Can you imagine God giving you that message for your corner of the world, let alone a whole city?! (120,000)
- Jonah’s visit to Ninevah was around 760-790 B.C. Ninevah was the headquarters (capital) of the Assyrian monarchy.
- The Assyrians were a fierce and cruel nation who showed little mercy to those they conquered (**2 Kings 19:17**).
- The Assyrians were a thorn in the side of Israel. Beginning in 733 BC under King Tilgath-pileser, Assyria took the Northern Kingdom’s land and carried the inhabitants into exile (**2 Kings 15:29**).
- Later, in 721 BC, another Assyrian king Shalmaneser besieged Israel’s capital, Samaria, and it fell three years later (**2 Kings 18:9-12**). This event fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy that God would use Assyria as the “**rod of His anger**” (**Isaiah 10:5-19**); that is, the Assyrian Empire was implementing God’s judgment against the idolatrous Israelites. The sovereign God takes full credit as the source of Assyria’s authority (**Isaiah 7:18; 8:7; 9:11; and Daniel 4:17**).
- Ninevah would eventually be destroyed and that happened in 612 B.C. by the Medes. This was in fulfillment of the prophet Nahum’s prediction that God would destroy the city (**Nahum 1**).
- God instructing Jonah to go and deliver His message to the city of Ninevah is like God sending any of us to people that have killed us and threatened to in the future.
- It would be like Elmer Fud laying down his gun and stopping hunting Bugs Bunny. Or Chip and Cricket Green becoming best buddies. Or Batman having dinner with whomever killed his parents.
- Think about what God has told each of us to do. We have been told to lay down our lives, preferences, rights, finances, even our families for the cause of Christ. Add to that we are called to serve one another, carry each other’s burdens, share the gospel (good news) of Jesus with others, add to it, some, if not many will reject and ridicule you because of it. All the while Satan is seeking to buffet and destroy you.
- God has instructed each of us in a direction that we don’t like or want to go in. And too often we have fled in the opposite direction.
- How often do many of us have little to no interest, compassion, or desire to listen at all. I will admit it, God has directed me to do something, and I have run the other direction.
- In what areas of life have you gone the other direction in?

2. God doesn’t run away from runaways.

- If you are one of God’s children, if you are a born-again, God fearing, believer in Jesus Christ, God will not allow you to disobey without correction.
- We might turn a blind eye or give excuses, but God will not. He is full of grace and mercy, but He is also love and truth. If you are His, you will be redirected.

- **Read verses 4-6.**
- **“But the Lord...”** those words are always beneficial to us, even when we don’t think they are.
- The Bible doesn’t say when the storm happened, or how long into the voyage it happened. I am sure there was a period when the sun was shining, and the weather was perfect. I think it would be safe to say Jonah probably thought he was going to be ok ignoring, excuse me, disobeying God.
- God sent a great wind, and a great storm somewhere along the journey. Where did the captain find Jonah?
- The Bible says Jonah was **“fast asleep”** meaning he was sound asleep, in a deep sleep. He didn’t know what was going on around him. He was dead to the world.
- How do you sleep when you are full of anxiety, conviction or guilt? I sleep horribly.
- Let me back up. What does God’s Word say about the ship’s crew **in verse 5?**
- They were afraid, they cried (prayed) out to their gods, threw cargo off to lighten the load. What does this say about the storm? If something has gotten experienced mariners panicked, it must have been life threatening.
- How ironic a pagan, (non-believer) ship’s captain had to call a man of God to prayer. **“Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.”**
- Brothers and sisters, for a time, we can be peacefully asleep while out of the will of God.
- There have been occasions where I have had people say that they and God are in a good place. While the whole time they were living in sin. “Preacher, God and I are all good, God must be ok with me I am still being blessed or I sleep like a baby at night...” So did Jonah!
- God’s timing is in God’s timing. He can dish out corrections whenever He wants and desires, and in ways He wants.
- God was not going to let Jonah run away. God will not allow any of His children to run away.

The captain was desperate; every known god should be appealed to so that one might grant relief from their peril (cf. we will not perish, v. 6). The need was so great that the men despaired for their lives; yet God’s servant slept. What an object lesson to God’s people then and now to awaken from apathy as crying people perish on the sea of life. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

3. God’s people’s disobedience can cause collateral damage to others.

- **Read verses 7-9.**
- The crew knew that what they were dealing with was of a divine source. They suspected someone was being dealt with, it had to be one of them, just not them.
- Isn’t it funny how mankind seems to look to assign blame but not willing to consider if it could be them to blame. It is so hard for us to admit when we sinned. We are so quick to justify and reject any responsibility for it.
- They cast lots and figured out it was Jonah’s fault. Then they fire off five questions at him.
- What did you do to cause all this to happen to us? Who are you? Where are you from? What country? And who are your people?
- Jonah responded to the sailors’ barrage of questions by stating with no uncertainty his nationality (I am a Hebrew) and the worth and power of His God.

- Though disobedient to God, Jonah at least knew what He is like. Jonah said that God is the LORD (Yahweh), the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God of Israel.
- Jonah also said his God is the God of heaven (**Gen. 24:3, 7**), the one true Sovereign, in contrast with the sailors' many false gods. Jonah also affirmed that Yahweh is the Creator, the One who made the sea and the land (**Ex. 20:11; Ps. 95:5**). As Creator of the world He can control nature, including storms on the sea (**Ps. 89:9**). The sailors clearly acknowledged this fact in their question (**Jonah 1:11**). It may seem strange that Jonah claimed to worship this God when he did not obey Him, but this is often true of believers.
- Jonah's disobedience had put the crew's lives in jeopardy.
- We must beware that our sins **WILL** affect others, it has a rippling affect, many could be innocently caught in the consequences of God dealing with us.
- Do you think any of you have been caught in the wake of my sins? What about you? Have any of us been caught in the wake of your disobedience? (The answer is yes; in case you didn't know)
- Many of the Bible's stories show how one person's disobedience affects an entire nation. One man's sin led to all mankind suffering with sin.
- Praise God that the righteousness of one man (Jesus) can cover the sins of all man.

4. How God's people respond to correction will affect others.

- How we respond can draw people in or push them away.
- **Read verses 10-16.**
- The sailors were "**exceedingly afraid**", they were terrified and said, "Why have you done this?" They knew that all of this happened because he fled from God and willfully went against God.
- In **verse 11**, they were asking Jonah how to right the situation. They didn't want to die because of his sins. This question affirmed emphatically that he was responsible for their predicament. It was more a statement of horror at Jonah's disobedience than a question of inquiry. The pagan sailors seemed to grasp the seriousness of his disobedience more than the prophet did! (Funny how they (pagans) understood the gravity of his disobedience than he did)
- In **verse 12**, Jonah takes responsibility for his sins, and even tells the sailors to throw him overboard to save their lives. Jonah took responsibility.
- This should be an application point for us. Own your junk, your sin, your disobedience. Don't deflect, justify, project, deny, gas light, which all of these are responses by someone who is narcissistic. God will continue to correct until we confess.
- The sailors, however, were not anxious to take human life for fear they would be held accountable for murder. This contrasts sharply with Jonah's lack of compassion for the Ninevites (**Jonah 4:1-2**).
- So, the men on the ship (except for Jonah) tried again to get back to land. But against the sovereign God, the sailors' meager efforts brought no relief. In fact, the storm intensified.
- Recognizing the futility of their efforts, and believing that Jonah's God controls the sea, they realized Jonah's instructions had to be carried out. Yet those Gentiles, not having the Law of

God, instinctively recognized the worth of human life and pleaded for His mercy on them for killing an innocent man. (Let that marinate in your head for a minute)

- Following the prophet's instructions (v. 12), the sailors threw Jonah into the raging sea, and it became calm. This showed them the reality and power of the God of Israel. They stood in awe of (fearing) the LORD. He had done what their gods could not do. The sudden calm was an answer to the sailors' prayers (v. 5).
- The calm also revealed that the storm had resulted from Jonah's disobedience and that an innocent life had not been snuffed out in casting him overboard. Utterly amazed at the sudden calm, they offered a sacrifice in praise to the LORD (Yahweh, Israel's God) and promised (made vows) to continue their praise.
- Again, the sailors are seen in contrast with their former passenger (Jonah). Whereas Jonah was disobedient to God, they were praising Him!
- God got the glory out of Jonah's disobedience. Those nonbelieving, pagan men, who were once searching for answers, are now seen offering sacrifice and vows, meaning they were converting over and following God (Yahweh, the God of Israel).
- So, not only is God going to do a work in Ninevah, but He got a twofer.
- Others are watching us and how we respond when we blow it. When we fall into sin. How we respond can lead others to God or push them away.
- Don't get me wrong, there will be individual's that will use your hypocrisy as an excuse not to follow God, but ultimately, they were seeking ways to reject God anyways.
- But many more will be drawn in by our transparency, humility, and vulnerability, because deep down they know that they have blown it too, differently, but they still blown it. And when they see that you are honest, it will empower them to be real with God as well.
- Individually we must accept responsibility to trust in Jesus. We must admit/acknowledge that we are a sinner, and because of our individual sin we are not capable of gaining access to heaven. We must humble ourselves and place our faith and trust into the hands of Jesus to save us.

Conclusion

It is so easy to pass judgment on people's actions in the Bible. But if you were told to go into the very heart of the most dangerous city on earth, what would you do?

How different is Jonah's action of running away from our own actions today when we have an opportunity to share the gospel, but we don't, or have an opportunity to show love to someone different from us but instead we avoid them?

What is the Nineveh in your life that you are perpetually fleeing?

Do you ever look around at this world and wish God would bring judgment against all the people whose evil deeds you hear, see, and experience?

Sometimes, our fear or hatred of someone can get in the way of sharing the gospel and obeying Jesus.

In the season 1 finale of The Chosen, Jesus leads the disciples into Samaria. When they learn he wants to go there, even though it shortens their journey, they raise a number of objections—which

essentially come down to fear and hatred. Jesus insists they follow him and go anyway (season 1, episode 8, "I Am He," directed by Dallas Jenkins, aired November 26, 2019, 37:59).

This is reminiscent of Jonah's call to Nineveh, a call that prompted him to run away, or of God's call to each of us to share our faith in an uncomfortable area or with an unfamiliar person.

Sought after (Isa. 62:12) Precious in his sight (Isa. 43:4) A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) Not condemned (Rom. 8:1) Forgiven (Col. 1:14) Loved (1 John 3:1) Accepted (Rom. 15:7) A child of God (John 1:12) Jesus' friend (John 15:14) Free (John 8:36) The temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) God's treasured possession (Deut. 7:6) Complete in Christ (Col. 2:10 NLT) Chosen (Col. 3:12) Called (2 Tim. 1:9) **An ambassador of the Most High God (2 Cor. 5:20) God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10 NLT) Able to do all things through Christ, who gives you strength (Phil. 4:13) More than a conqueror through Jesus, who loves you (Rom. 8:37)**