

Good morning,

This morning, our study will be in the book of Jonah 1.

Let's go ahead and pray...

Anytime anyone brings up the book of Jonah – we always think of the great fish that swallowed Jonah up or we think of the disobedient prophet who runs from God or possibly you we may think of the greatest sermon ever spoken (less than 10 words) and an entire city repents.

However, the book of Jonah is much more than ***Finding Nemo***.

The book of Jonah is really about demonstrating to us many of God's attributes.

- His sovereignty over everything that happens in our lives
- His grace and mercy for those that rebel against Him
- His immense love for us demonstrated by the patience He has for each and every one of us and He does this for one reason alone...He does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance.

This is what the book of Jonah is all about.

[Jon 1:1-17 CSB]

The book of Jonah is one of my favorite books in scriptures.

This book is grouped in with the other minor prophets like Nahum, Amos and Habbakuk among others – not because they were any lesser prophets that Jeremiah and Isaiah or Ezekiel but simply because the books are smaller in length.

The author is unknown. It was written between 793-753 BC during the reign of King Jeroboam II.

The book of Jonah is a very easy read – only four chapters long, you could read it in less than 10 minutes.

The narrative is very easy to follow.

I believe that this is the reason that when we think of the book of Jonah, we tend to think of it as a story for little children.

I love the story of the sceptic that saw a little girl standing one day holding her Jonah book. The sceptic asks her, “You really don’t believe that story do you?” And she shakes her head yes. The sceptic continues to ask, “Well then, how do you explain Jonah being in the belly of a fish for 3 days – how did he survive?”

The little girl smiles and says, “I don’t know - when I get to heaven and see Jonah, I will ask him.”

The sceptic then continues with one more question, “Well, what if Jonah isn’t in heaven?”

The little girl without missing a beat responds with, “Well then, you can ask him”

1. The Commission

"Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because their evil has come up before me.

Jonah was a prophet of God,
Now, a prophet of God was one who was used by God to communicate His (God's) message to the world.

How did the prophets get the message, in Ezekiel and Isaiah's case, they were given a vision.

In other instances, like Jonah here, the Word of God came to the prophet directly.

Now, one of the drawbacks of being a prophet was that you were either liked or disliked based upon the message that God had given to you to give.

A message of prosperity or victory during wartime was well received. We see earlier in the scriptures, Jonah being a recipient of this.

[2Ki 14:25 NKJV] 25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who [was] from Gath Hepher.

However, many times, the message was one of rebuke. Elijah was sought to be killed by the queen of Israel. Some Jewish writings state that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in half.

Listen to the words of our Lord.

[Luk 13:34-35 NKJV] 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen [gathers] her brood under [her] wings, but you were not willing! 35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until [the time] comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "

And we see another example of this as Stephen rebukes the religious leaders in the book of Acts.

[Act 7:52 NKJV] 52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,
Of course, later on in the chapter after Stephen delivers the message to the religious leaders regarding their evil ways and how they were exactly like their fathers, Stephen is stoned to death as well.

As believers, we have been commissioned as well. Meaning, we are all called to deliver the good news of the gospel to the entire world.

[Mat 28:18-20 NKJV] 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching

them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

The big difference between the commissions God had given most of the other prophets and Jonah was that God wanted Jonah to give this message to a gentile nation. He is commissioned to go to Nineveh.

What was the reason for the commission to go to Nineveh?

Verse 2 tells us that their wickedness has come up before Me. God could smell the stench of the wickedness of the people of Nineveh.

You see the Assyrians, the people of Nineveh, were notorious for their wickedness.

In the battlefields, they would put hooks on the noses of their captives and drag them back to their land. They would cut off appendages of those that they had conquered and use some of the captive's heads as decorations.

People throughout the region feared the Assyrians so much that many times they would commit mass suicide instead of allowing themselves to become captives of the Assyrians.

The book of Nahum, another minor prophet, goes over in detail regarding the wickedness of the people of Nineveh.

Growing up, we lived next door to a golf course that used to be a landfill before it was a golf course.

So we always had a rodent problem. My parents would use poison to kill them and what would happen is that the rodents would eat the poison and then go die in between the walls.

The bigger the rodent, the more it would stink as it would decay in our walls. Many times, we simply waited it out and other times, the stench was so bad that something had to get done.

So here God is doing something about it – the stench has become unbearable. This is why He is sending Jonah to Nineveh.

There is a problem though – **Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh.**

Jonah flees from God in the opposite direction that God had sent him to. That would be like instead of going to New York, you head for Hawaii.

Tarshish was the farthest west you could get from Jerusalem in those days. It is believed that Tarshish is in the area of modern day Spain.

So the question is why did Jonah flee? Was he scared of what the people of Nineveh were going to do to him? I don't think so.

The reason that Jonah fled was because he did not want God to demonstrate His mercy and grace upon the people of Nineveh. How do I know this? The scriptures tell us.

[Jon 4:2 CSB] 2 He prayed to the LORD: "Please, LORD, isn't this what I thought while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and

compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster.

Jonah wanted Nineveh to fry. Jonah didn't want the inhabitants of Nineveh to experience the grace and mercy of God in the same way that the people of Israel had experienced it.

However, we must not forget that God cares about all people.

John 3:16 - For God so loved **the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Notice that it does not say for God loved only Christians or only Jews or the only the elect. John 3:16 is for everyone. Jesus Christ died once and for all.

So, Jonah heads down to Joppa and it **just happens** that there is a ship heading to a place that is going to take him far away from God's will.

Sounds too good to be true.

Is this coincidence or do you think that Satan had that ship waiting for Jonah.

Listen, when we start to drift from God's will for us, the enemy will always be willing to be there to provide an avenue for us to continue to drift further and further from our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Count on it.

Doors will open – for the wrong reason.

Do not mistake the fact that just because God has allowed something to happen to somehow believe that it is God's will.

- You get into an argument with your spouse and ten minutes later, you get a notification from an old girlfriend or old boyfriend.
- You've been struggling with pornography and you get an email telling you that you are in luck because HBO is airing free for the weekend. The same weekend your wife is going to go visit her mom and taking the kids with her.

Jonah pays the fare. He actually had the funds to pay the fare.

Notice the progression of Jonah as the scriptures tell us that he kept going down, first to Joppa and then he goes down into the ship.

Jonah is not done going down church.

Many times when we are disobedient to God, we will continue that downward spiral until we actually hit rock bottom. It is at this point that we come to the realization that we should have listened to God all along. This is what's going to happen to Jonah.

The Storm (4-9)

So Jonah gets on the ship and just like Gilligan, he starts off on this three hour tour. Jonah probably looked at the disappearing land and figured that he had escaped God's commission. He probably thought that now Nineveh would never experience God's grace and mercy.

The problem for Jonah is that God is omnipresent and omniscient – two other attributes.

Listen to the words of King David in Psalm 139

[Psa 139:2-8 CSB] 2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. 3 You observe my travels and my rest; you are aware of all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, LORD. 5 You have encircled me; you have placed your hand on me. 6 This wondrous knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it. 7 Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

There is nowhere that Jonah could have gone to escape the presence of God.

And because He is all-knowing – God already had a plan for His AWOL prophet as He sends out a storm.

At the beginning of the chapter we see God speak to Jonah through His word. After Jonah disobeys God, God will no longer speak to Jonah through His word but now He will speak to him through His works – that is through the storm, the mighty tempest and in a little while, the great fish.

In verse 5 it tells us that the mariners or sailors were extremely afraid and they start doing everything in the power to lighten the boat.

In fact, it had gotten so bad that they each started crying out to their own gods. The seas must have been really rough for sailors to have been crying out to their gods –

Sailors tend to be tenacious when it comes to their occupation – I used to watch the show where the guys catch King Crab up in Alaska and would see how high those waves would pound the side of the ships. They would continue to work.

So while the sailors are crying out to their gods, Jonah had gone down underneath the boat and was fast asleep. Notice the word “down” again.

What a curious and tragic scene!

All the sailors were religious men, devout in their prayers to their gods. Yet their gods were really nothing, and could do nothing. There was one man on the ship who had a relationship with the one true God, who knew His Word, and who worshipped Him – yet he was asleep!

Here we have an example of what sin does to us as it lures us to sleep.

The further Jonah drifted from God, the more he was able to tune God out and therefore, the storm did not bother him.

Jonah felt that because he was a prophet of God, he was still in good terms with God. What a false sense of security.

This should be a warning to the believer regarding living a complacent Christian walk.

A sleeping Christian will not pray – just like Jonah

A sleeping Christian will tend to hide out – just like Jonah

A sleeping Christian will tend to not be aware of their surroundings – just like Jonah

Listen church, we live in a time where the world around us is crying out to different gods (just like the sailors) as the world around us is falling apart and yet, many in the church are a sleep.

Just like Jonah.

Well, Jonah continues his long siesta until the ship's captain walks in and says, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up! Call to your god. Maybe this god will consider us, and we won't perish."

It is never a good thing when God uses a nonbeliever to convict us.

The captain is calling for Jonah to call out to his god – the same god that he is in the midst of fleeing.

In verse 7,8 – the sailors cast lots and the lot fall on Jonah –

Now the sailors realize that Jonah is the reason for the storm. They want answers and they proceed to question Jonah.

Let's look at Jonah's response in verse 9.

[Jon 1:9 CSB] 9 He answered them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land."

In his response, Jonah declares to them that he worships Yahweh or Jehovah.

When "LORD" occurs in the Old Testament, referring to God, it is usually a rendering of "Adonai," a name/title of God that emphasizes His lordship.

So what Jonah is saying here is, I worship Yahweh. Distinguishing the one true God against the false gods that the sailors worshipped.

This revelation must have been startling to the sailors – they were aware of the God of the Hebrews. They knew who Yahweh was.

He was the God that parted the Red Sea during the Exodus, He was the God that cause the great walls of Jericho to come crashing down and now they have one of His ambassadors on their ship and Jonah reveals to them that it is because of his disobedience that the storm is taking place.

And the storm just continued to get rougher and rougher.

In verse 11, they ask Jonah, "What shall we do that the sea may be calm for us?"

And Jonah provides for them the cure.

Rejecting The Cure (12,13)

I want to draw your attention to verse 12, look at the words spoken by Jonah, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea so that it will calm down for you, for I know that I'm to blame for this great storm that is against you." 13

Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they couldn't because the sea was raging against them more and more.

Jonah provides the sailors with the solution – all that they had to do was to throw Jonah into the water and they would be saved. It is a pretty simple solution if they would have followed it.

Instead, they proceeded to depend on their own might in order to save themselves and it turned out to be useless. No amount of rowing was going to get the sailors onto dry land.

Before I make my point, I want to provide you with another example (Numbers 21), in this event, the children of Israel are once again complaining about God's provisions in the wilderness.

What a surprise - after all, this is what they did for 40 years.

[Num 21:5-9 NKJV] 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For [there is] no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." 6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery [serpent], and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on

a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

In this example, God tells Moses to make a serpent and put it on a pole. If someone gets bit by a serpent, the only way that they would not die was to simply look at the bronze serpent. If they failed to look at the serpent – they would die.

In both examples, the people are provided with the solution on how to save their lives.

However, it is up to the individual to make the choice whether or not he or she is going to accept the solution or reject it.

Those that got bitten in the wilderness and failed to look at the bronze serpent – died. The sailors also rejected initially the solution and took it upon themselves to fix the solution.

So here is my point, there are individuals that when you share with them the gospel and show them in the scriptures that salvation is a gift from God. That it is about grace – we have nothing to do with it.

Many will reject it and take it upon themselves in finding an alternative way –

Those that spend their lives trying to earn their way into heaven are just like the sailors who kept rowing and rowing to no avail.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

The bronze serpent that Moses hangs on the pole for the Israelites, is a picture of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must remember the He too was hung on a pole for us.

As believers, we should never lose focus of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for you and me.

The sailors initially do not want to throw Jonah overboard – but we must remember that God is patient.

[Rom 2:4 CSB] 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

The same restraint and patience that God is demonstrating to Jonah – He is demonstrating it toward the sailors and also toward the city of Nineveh.

Because God is patient, we see the sailors now crying out to the one true God. They are acknowledging who God is and also acknowledging His sovereignty over their lives.

So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the storm stops.

[Mar 4:35-41 CSB] 35 On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." 36 So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die? " 39 He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still! " The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? " 41 And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him! "

[Jonah 1:16 NLT] 16 The sailors were awestruck (feared) by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

We see a transition in what the sailors feared. From fearing the storm to now fearing the Lord.

[Jon 1:17 CSB] 17 The LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

The chapter ends with God preparing a great fish to swallow Jonah. It doesn't tell us what type of fish.

The important observation is that God prepared it.

God is still in control.

In conclusion,

The book of Jonah will teach us that God is the God of second chances, the God of third chances and so on.

His abundant grace and mercy upon all man.

Maybe right now, some of us here might be like Jonah and are in the process of running away from Him or we are refusing to share the gospel with others because we dislike them or because we feel that they should be judged and not given the same grace and mercy offered to us.

The world around us is crying out to their gods, our responsibility is to make ourselves available to be utilized by the one true God according to His will. Not ours.

Ultimately, God's will, will get done. Whether we chose to obey Him or not. If we don't, God will use any means to correct you, even a great fish.

Let's pray...

This morning, I want to give an opportunity to anyone here that does not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

- The bible tells us that we all fall short of the glory of God because we are all sinners.
- The good news is that Jesus Christ died for us.
- And because He died for us, we can have a relationship with Him and experience His love and be a child of God.

In order to accept Jesus Christ, you must admit that you are a sinner, accept the work that He did on the cross for you and repent from all of your sins.

"Jesus, I know that I have sinned against you. I know that my sin has separated me from You.

I know that I have earned punishment from You, and that the fair punishment would be death.

Jesus, I believe that You died in my place. Forgive me for my sin. I cannot cover or take my sin away, I am relying totally and only on You. You are the only one who can save me. I reject my sin, I turn away from it, I repent.

Come into my life, take away my sin, and show me how to live my life in a way that is right and pleasing to You."