

Hero 2008 JONAH-MAN FOR NINEVEH

Jonah 2:1-10

What a beautiful day to be around the lake.
I grew up around water with the Jim river running around our farm,
There is something refreshing about it.
Today we are honored to do baptism in the lake.

I like the story of the little boy and his cat who were in the kitchen.

The boy's mother came to see what they were doing,
and she heard the little boy preaching God's word to his cat.
So she went about her chores.
Later she heard the cat fussing, so she went to see what was going on.
The little boy had the cat in their kitchen sink full of water.
The mother told him that cats don't like water.
The boy sharply replied,
"He should've thought of that before she joined the church!"

Most of the times when you fishing you catch fish,
But there are those rarities of times
When the fish catches you.

James Bartley found that true on a whaling ship *Star of the East*.

In 1891, near the Falkland Islands, the two boats had succeeded in harpooning a whale, but the second was upended by the whale's tail, its crew tossed into the water. One Man drowned, most were rescued, but one man named Bartley, could not be found. The whale was killed and hauled to the side of the ship, where the crew set to work carving up the carcass. The next morning they hoisted the stomach on deck and were surprised to see signs of life. Inside they found the unconscious Bartley, When he was revived he recalled being swallowed by a great darkness, then slipping down into a large space, Where he felt slimy stuff around him and realized he'd been swallowed by the whale. He could breathe, but the heat sucked the energy out of him and eventually he passed out. The only lasting effect of the incident was that the skin of his face, neck, and hands was bleached to the color of parchment by the whale's gastric juices.

The skeptics ask, can it be true that a man was swallowed by a large fish?

But Jesus said it was true. In Matthew 12:39-41

The Gospel writers wrote with the expectation that you
Would **believe** the account as real and historical, that
Jonah was a man who was swallowed by a great fish.

I. JONAH'S CALL

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

**First of all God's direction for Jonah was very clear
God specifically named **Jonah the son of Amittai**,
No misunderstanding of who God was calling.
There is no misunderstanding of what God was asking him to do.**

Go to Nineveh and preach against it.
He even included the reason for this message.
Because its wickedness has come up before me.
We have the man, the place, and the purpose.

**There are a lot of people that would give their eye-teeth
to know for certain God's direction and plan and purpose, for their lives.**
But Jonah is no ordinary person.
He has been a prophet of God.
And has had a history of being faithful,

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. Jonah 1:3

This wasn't a direct route to Tarshish,
Just like for us today there is no direct route to Chicago
We have to go to Minneapolis.
Well Joppa was Minneapolis.

He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port.
**After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the
LORD .**

What is it that makes obedience so difficult for Jonah and for us?

First of all Jonah thought he had two reasons to flee from God call.

1). HE THOUGHT GOD WAS MAKING A MISTAKE.

The Ninivites had destroyed Jerusalem,
desecrated the Holy of Holies stolen the utensils,
Jonah had prophesied and preached against these wicked enemies of Israel.
And now he didn't want to go and preach to save them,
Be make to look like a fool that he had made a mistake.
He fled to Tarshish.

What is it that makes obedience so difficult for us?
Are we thinking about ourselves? Our reputations?
Our honor or self-importance?

Second:

2). HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND GOD'S MERCY.

Jonah didn't want them forgiven.

He didn't want God to repent of his intention to destroy them.

**Jonah 4:2 He prays: "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home?
That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. 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 because God granted mercy
Instead of judgment to the Ninevites.,
Jonah was disobedient because of his own prejudice and hatred.

Preacher Jonathan Swift wrote some verses that expressed Jonah's frame of mind:

*We are God's chosen few,
All others will be damned;
There is no place in heaven for you,
We can't have heaven crammed*

Jonah's life was a paradox:

A prophet of God, yet a runaway from God
 A man drowned, and yet alive.
 A preacher of repentance, yet one that repines at repentance.

II. JONAH'S REBELLION

So he ran away.
 There he took a ship for Tarshish,
 Well he never arrived there,
 You see friend when we disobey God
 There is never a safe place to hide in the world.

**Psalmist says: If I go to the highest heavens God is there,
 If I go to the deepest part of the sea God is there. Psalms 139:8**

Was the Psalmist thinking of Jonah, when he wrote that?

Satan is a deceiver.
 He may talk about the world as a good deal,
 But believe me the world will make you its slave.
 Jonah knew better.
 He had lived God's message,
 Preached it,
 Taught it,
 Prophesied it.
 Now he fled it.

But He was a child of God, and God does not give up so easy.

⁴ Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. Jonah 1:4

When we move away from God we
 Find disorder and confusion,
 And like Jonah we find ourselves in the midst of a storm.
 the sad thing is, we don't even know it.

All the Sailors were

⁵ All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. Jonah 1:5a

But where was Jonah?

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. Sleeping. Jonah 1:5

When you flee from God you also flee from common sense.
 Many don't even see their life is in danger.
 Satan has put Jonah into a deep sleep,
 Blind to the danger around him,
 Sleeping in a sinking ship.

⁶ The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

Its rather ironic, but the World wants the man of God awake.
 Whether its tornadoes, 9/11s, hurricanes, sickness, broken bones and relationship,
 divorces and deaths
 The world wants the man of God awake.

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

⁸ So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What did you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" Jonah 1:8

When the world is in trouble,
And cancer is out of control, theirs divorce, addiction, heart failure
They come asking the Christian to wake up and pray
Because deep down they all hope that there is an
all powerful God to deliver them.

Jonah said:

"I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD , the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." ¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD , because he had already told them so.)

Jonah 1:9-10

The world gets confused when the Christian sins,
and doesn't follow God's Word,
When a pastor defaults, a priest defects, or a church
Moves outside the bounds of Scriptural Holiness,
The world gets angry, even hostile about it.
Because deep down they want to believe that
There is a God for them.
Even when they are not following or obeying him themselves.

¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" ¹² "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." Jonah 1:11-12

The sea worthy crew terrified of the storm,
Tossed the rebellious prophet Jonah into the sea,
He was swallowed by a great fish,
And the sea became calmed.

III. JONAH'S OBEDIENCE

Jonah wanted to die and said so in Jonah 4:3

Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live. Jonah4:3

So he thought he would die by drowning.

But God had different plans.

He ended up as fish food.

Suddenly we have a more compliant Jonah.

Now the good thing is that this was not a carnivorous fish
with digestive enzymes that worked on protein,
Because Jonah was made up of protein.
This was a plant-eating fish with a different digestive system.
we know that because it says

Seaweed was warped around my head Jonah 2:5

Suddenly 'there inside the fish,
Panic hits.

He says: In my distress I called to the Lord and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. Jonah 2:2

We don't know when Jonah changed his mind,
And began to pray, but I imagine it was when his feet hit the walls
of the belly of the fish.
But after three day and three nights.
We find a new Jonah.
Vowing obedience to the living God.

Friends, this begs the question of all of us,
What will it take to turn you on to obedience, to the living God?
Fish belly, stroke attack, a heart break,
Don't let it get that far.

If God brings you to it,

He will bring you through it

the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah 2:10

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah 3:1-2

and miracle of miracle, Jonah obeyed?

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Jonah 3:3

Nineveh was a city 48 miles in circumference,
With 1500 towers, and 120,000 people in it.
It took Jonah three days to preach and walk thru it.

⁴ On the first day... ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. Jonah 3:4-5

⁶ When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷ Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: Jonah 3:6-7

Why did this pagan city turn so quickly to God?
Was it the preaching? We preachers may think were pretty good.
But take that same preacher,
Spit him up out of the belly of a fish,
In front of a crowded beach with
His skin turned white from the gastric juices
Wrapped in stinky seaweed, and
We'd probably have revival today.

Of course it helped us know that the Ninivites God called DAGON
was a pagan God depicted as being part man and part fish.
Archeologists have uncovered numerous statues,
bas-relief clay engravings of a figure with a fish head above the human head,
and the feet of a man sticking out before the tail of the fish.
When the great fish vomited Jonah up on the shore,
They believed their God Dagon

had sent a message to them out of the sea,
 They repented, turned to the living God
 Put on sackcloth and ashes, and sought God's mercy.

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. Jonah 3:10

Do you think Jonah was happy with his success
Jonah was distraught that God had spared Nineveh.
 He expected the ashes of destruction,
 Not the ashes of repentance.

Here we come to the real lesson of the book of Jonah.
 That God doesn't just save Hebrews, but also Ninivites.
 Not just Missouri Synod Lutherans, but Catholics and Methodist,
 Not just Americans, but Chinese, and Iragis.
 God wants to save you and me,
 God so loved the world,
 The story of Jonah show us no one is outside the mercy of the Cross.
 If they choose to believe.

SLIDE ---Even as I speak to you now,
 Christian and other minorities are moving into Modern day Nineveh or northern Iraq.
 The traditional home of these Assyrian Christians.
 It was their ancestor who first encountered God thru Jonah.
 And it is their children, who today are providing a refuge for Christians,
 from the Terrorist, the persecution, and the military surge
 That would seek to destroy them.

Should I not be concerned about the great city? God asked Jonah.

God is still concerned about them and about you.

As we stand here before this beautiful setting,
 What about your life? What will it take for God to reach you?
 The cross of Christ cut the curse of sin,
 The blood of Christ washed us clean
 The Resurrection of Christ set us free.
 The gift of salvation is for everyone who would believe.

**Will you follow Jonah, this great hero of the faith
 AND OBEY GOD'S CALL for your life?**