

Jonah 1:1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amitai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord

Jonah 1:17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Today, we'll continue our study on the Book of Jonah.

Story : While Jonah inside the whale, the whale met an octopus. The octopus said to the whale, “Hey I heard someone was thrown into the sea last night during that crazy storm.” The whale said, “Yes, I know.” The octopus added, “I heard it was about this man named Jonah who wanted to die rather than obey God. Who does that?”. The whale said, “Hmm, I think that man Jonah realized his mistake.” The octopus asked, “How did you know that?” The whale replied, “Well...” (winking at the octopus) “I have inside information.”

Background : Jonah, “yonah” in Hebrew was one of the 12 Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. Please note the reason why they are called the Minor prophets is not because they are less significant than the Major prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. It's because of the volume of work. E.g. Jonah has 4 chapters while Isaiah has 66 chapters

We also established last week, that this is not a fable or an allegory. It's a real story. Again, even if it's called the Book of Jonah. It's a story about God.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

GOD'S MISSION, GOD'S MISSIONARY, GOD'S MERCY

I. GOD'S MISSION

What was God's mission? Save Nineveh.

Jonah 1:1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amitai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

We saw a glimpse of Jonah's reaction when God chose to save Nineveh. They were a very cruel conquering nation.

So today, let's talk about

II. GOD'S MISSIONARY

We will have to spend some time on this part because after all the story is about God's missionary, Jonah.

And you will see, as we study this, that one of the most important thing to the Lord is “How is our heart?”

We will have to divide this into three parts : Rebellion, Repentance, Relapse

Etymology: Jonah “yonah” which means “dove”

This is interesting since “dove” or “pigeons” were used to bring message of deliverance.

- Doves first appeared in the story of Noah when he was trying to find out if there's dry land already after the Great Flood. He let out a raven first and then it came back. Then he let out a dove and it came back. He waited for seven days and then “sent out the dove again from the ark.” When the dove returned, it had an olive leaf on its beak and then Noah waited 7 days and then sent out the dove again and it did not return. (Genesis 8:6-12)
- In Leviticus, if you cannot afford a lamb, you can bring two turtledoves or pigeons (yona) as a sacrificial offering (Leviticus 5:7) It shows that anyone can come rich and poor and worship God.

In this instance, God wanted Yona to preach against Nineveh and what was his reaction?

1. Jonah's Rebellion

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

(Show map) In order to understand this, let us trace what Jonah did:

- Remember he was from Gath Hepher and asked to go east to Nineveh (that's around 1000km). It will take almost a month for him to go there during that time. It's like travelling from Brampton to short of the border of New Brunswick.
- But instead of going there, he went to Joppa (which is the port during that time) of Israel and rode a boat to Tarshish. Tarshish is in modern-day Spain. That's around 4000 kilometers.

In short, Jonah instead of going to New Brunswick, he went the opposite way going to Vancouver.

Last week, we already knew the reason the reason why Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was Israel's enemies. They were a cruel people and I showed that last week, how cruel they were and Jonah knew that if he preached God can save them. And the very least reason, is he knows it can be a useless exercise.

Illustration: (Warning P.G.) You are a Jew and you know Hamas in October 7, 2023 attacked innocent Jews. They killed babies, decapitated men and women, burned them. One incident even described something like this.

“They laid a woman down and I understood that he is raping her ... They passed her on to another person,” she told police in a video reviewed by the Guardian. “And he cuts her breast, he throws it on the road and they are playing with it.”

One raped woman was “shredded to pieces” and another “stabbed repeatedly in the back while she was being raped”, the same witness said in an interview with the New York Times.” (Article from “The Guardian” on January 18, 2024)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/18/evidence-points-to-systematic-use-of-rape-by-hamas-in-7-october-attacks>

Now imagine, you a Jew and God is telling you to go to Hamas, its soldiers and its leaders and tell them what God is about to do.

The first question you’re going to ask yourself, “Why is God asking me to do this?” THERE’S NO LOGICAL REASON AT ALL. Why would I warn them? Let them suffer!!!

Application: There will be times we will never understand what God’s commands are.

Example : The first command in the Bible is not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and God never gave the reason why. (Genesis 2)

In fact, it was the devil who gave the reason on why God did not want them to eat from that tree, AND WE KNOW IT’S A LIE, since Satan is the father of lies.

What was Satan’s reason?

Genesis 3: 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

What was his purpose? In order for you NOT TO trust God!

Listen, beloved of God. We will know that we are doing God’s will when we are trusting Him in whatever situation you are undergoing through in your life EVEN IF WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY HE IS ASKING US TO DO IT.

For example, the command in

1 Thessalonians 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances.

It doesn’t make sense. I lost my job. Give thanks? I am terribly sick right now. Give thanks? I lost everything, even my relationships. Give thanks?

It doesn't make sense. It will only make sense when we follow Him because we trust Him.

And what is the promise of the Lord when we trust Him? PEACE!!!

Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And that was the problem with Jonah, he did not trust the command of the Lord.

What was his plan? *To run away from the Lord and to flee from the Lord.*

We have to remember during that time, they think Tarshish was at the end of the earth. So Jonah was running away from God, to hide from God.

What a foolish thought? Thinking that we can hide from God.

Look at what Psalm 139 says:

Psalm 139: 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

10 even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

But that is what happens when we disobey God. We forget that God sees everything and He knows where we are.

As one preacher has said, “We become atheists when we sin”

Now, we think when Jonah disobeys God, God will just say, “Ok, I will find another person.” And you, I will just destroy you. How dare you disobey me?

But look at what God did?

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

And we all know what happened. We'll fast forward it a little.

- The pagans were crying out to their own gods. Remember these are seasoned sailors so they knew this is a supernatural kind of storm.

- The captain saw Jonah and saw him in a deep sleep and woke him up to call on his God.
- Then they cast lots to find out who is responsible for this. Obviously, it fell on Jonah.
- They asked who he is and what he has done.

9 He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry 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.)

- So they asked him what they should do and Jonah said to just throw him into the sea.
- But still the men did not want to do that and tried their best to row to land and it didn't work.

13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder (sa-ar...raging) than before.

As if the storm is saying, I need to take something that's not yours!

- **So they asked forgiveness from God and threw Jonah into the sea.**

15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

And you know what happened next again.

17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Instead of letting Jonah die, He saved him by sending a huge fish.

What's the lesson behind this?

Listen carefully. If God has chosen you, He will never give up on you even if you give up on Him.

Illustration: That's why I always love using the illustration of the Fireman's Grip. When a fireman wants to save you and reaches out to you. He doesn't hold you by the hand. He holds you on the arm. So even if you let go, he is still holding you.

Yes, there will be times, it seems that you will never be able to understand God's ways and we want to give up on Him and even if we give up on Him, God will never give up on us.

IMPORTANT : God is saying, “I know what I’m asking you to do is hard. I know asking you to trust me doesn’t make sense at this point. I know you don’t want it. But rest assure that I know it’s hard but I will be with you and I am with you.

That’s why I love God’s Word from Isaiah.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (ESV)

The question is, “Why wouldn’t God give up on those He has chosen?”

Let’s look at verse 1 of Isaiah 43

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

The Lord is saying to us, “Akin ka”. Even if you want to give up on Me, I will never give up on you.

Isn’t that what our Lord said, to those who are saved...truly saved.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.

Story : (Show photo) The photo shows a person filming from the balcony. Three masked men were trying to kidnap the girl but the father was holding on to his daughter while he was being hit by a hammer on the head.

As you can see, it was the body and the blood of his father that covered the daughter and prevented the kidnappers from taking her.

It’s the same with us, Satan and the world will try to pull us away from the Lord but His body and blood holds on to us and will continue to cover us.

Earlier, we sang “Through It All” and the lyrics say
“You’ll never let me go, through it all.”

Again, why? Let’s read this again.

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (ESV)

Because that’s the love of God for those who belong to Him.

Next time, we'll continue with God's missionary. We talked about his rebellion and not giving up on him. Next time, we'll continue to see how he repented and how he relapsed again.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

S.G.D.