

Series: Seas of Grace

C.R. 5-22-22

"A City in Sackcloth"

Text: Jonah 3: 4-10

Intro: Over the past few weeks we have been on a journey with Jonah. We have witnessed him running from God, running back to God, and recommissioned by God. All of that brings us to today as we unpack what might be the world's greatest revival.

This revival occurs in the strangest of ways. With a preacher who seems to have no love for the people to whom he is preaching. There had been no prayer meetings in preparation for this revival. No teams had gone into Nineveh to pass out fliers and invite anyone. And yet, we our text today unfold for us one the great miracles of the Bible. **Let's take a closer look at A City in Sackcloth.**

1) The Man (v. 4)

- a. What we have here is not a perfect man by no means, but certainly a repentant man.
- b. A man who now has a second chance to obey God, even though he is not the biggest fan of the assignment.
- c. Jonah has had an encounter with God and had done what every messenger of God must do, submitted to the one who holds all authority.
- d. God could have spoken to Nineveh any way he wanted to, and yet he chose the voice of a man to do it.
- e. This man who had now experienced first-hand the wrath of God, and the grace of God goes walking into a massive city of people with no idea of His God and cries out a message of "40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown".
- f. Not a church, not a movement, not a tent meeting, just a man resigned to the will of the Father.

2) The Message (v. 4)

- a. Also, of great importance what the message.
- b. Note that Jonah did not say what he wanted to say. His orders were to say only what God wanted him to say.
- c. The author only gives us 8 words (5 in Hebrew).
- d. It is not in the number of words used that matters, but whose words it is matters most.
- e. Jonah stood with God's word. There is power in God's word. It is sharp, and quick, and powerful and true.
- f. He did not say "In my opinion, or I think," He stated what God said and that is enough.

- g. But as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. So skillful is he that with the weakest instrument he can produce the mightiest workmanship. (**Spurgeon**)
- h. Note the message. 40 days and you shall be overthrown. No other details are given. Will it be another army, an earthquake or other natural disaster? They don't know.
- i. Nineveh had been a prosperous place. They had more than they knew what to do with, and they had grown so comfortable in that.
- j. Now this wild looking man comes walking down their streets to let them know that judgment is just around the corner.
- k. One day they are conducting their business as usual, and the next the message of God through God's man is piercing their very soul.
- l. This one message showed them their sin, their shortness of time, and their destruction.

3) The Mandate. (v.5-9)

- a. The result of the message was one of great repentance.
- b. Note the phrase "they believed God". Not Jonah, God.
- c. Repentance implies a belief of the truth.
- d. If we truly believe God and his word, then repentance will be the result.
- e. Who in here has not sinned? Who in here has not lusted, gossiped, or slandered? Who in here has not tricked, cheated, or been angry without a cause? Who in here has loved his neighbor as himself, and even now is following God completely?
- f. Who in here who truly investigates their lives need not blush?
- g. (**Spurgeon**) While looking into our heart, we discover it to be a nest of unclean birds, full of all manner of evil and loathsome things.
- h. The mandate in Nineveh is the same today. Look into and listen to God's word and make a decision. Either to repent and conform, or go your own way.
- i. Nineveh from the King to pauper, from the greatest to the least put on sackcloth and ash and fasted and mourned and grieved over their wrongs.
- j. **William Nevins:** "There are two kinds of repentance; one is that of Judas, the other that of Peter; the one is ice broken, the other ice melted."
- k. They had been told 40 days. What a brief time. How they must have looked at the calendar and lay awake at night wondering what might happen.
- l. **Note:** There may be some here today who have much less time than that. How many times have we sat together with someone on Sunday only to bury them on Thursday?
- m. Even if it were 40 years, how short a time is that.
- n. God is surely showing us our end in these days.
- o. **Fuller:** "You cannot repent too soon, because you don't know how soon it may be too late".

- p. **Note:** The message does not speak of mercy or grace. It only speaks of destruction, and yet with only hope to go on the city begins to fast and mourn over its sin.
- q. "Their doubt might give fervor to their cries, but our certainty should give deeper earnestness and confidence to ours".
- r. Nineveh decided we will repent and hope.

4) The Mercy (V.10)

- a. Mercy: Not getting what we do deserve. Grace: Getting what we don't deserve.
- b. Yet, I think, the greatest confidence which the king of Nineveh would have would be derived from the following suggestion. "Oh," said he, "if God had meant to destroy us without giving us an opportunity of pardon, he would not have sent Jonah forty days beforehand. He would have given us no time at all. He would simply have given a blow and a word, but the blow would have been first. He would have overthrown the city in his wrath without a single message. What did he do to Sodom? He sent no messenger there. The sun rose and the fire descended from God's terrible right hand. Not so Nineveh; it had its warning. And now, sinner, turn thou this to good account. Thou hast had many a warning. Thou art this day warned, nay, more thou art affectionately invited to come to Christ. The voice from the cross is speaking, and each trickling drop of blood crieth, "Amen."