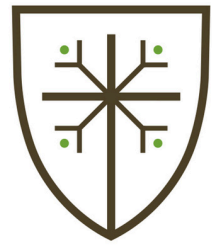


GOD ON THE MARGINS

A story of Jonah, Habakkuk, and Esther

SERMON NOTES



August 17, 2025

SERMON INFO

TITLE
"Everyone's Story"

PREACHER
Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

TEXTS
Jonah 1:1-7
1 John 4:9-12
Matthew 7:24-27

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At what times in your life do you find it most difficult to seek God's face?
2. How does seeking his face and studying his Word when we aren't in a stormy season help us when the storms arise?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

This week, Tim began our new series "God on the Margins" with two questions: "What is it like to live in a world in which God can seem absent from our lives?" and "How can we find true rest and true security in a world like this." To answer these, we looked at three points from the story of Jonah.

Trajectory

In our passage from Jonah, we find the word "arise" three times. But the trajectory of Jonah's actions is just the opposite. He does arise, but not to do as the Lord commanded. Instead, he goes down to the city of Joppa, down into the ship, and down into the innermost part of the ship. "Down" is not just Jonah's physical trajectory but also the current spiritual direction of his soul. The irony is that the one God has called to arise sinks lower than anyone else in the story. Even the pagan sailors pray, but Jonah does not. He is fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the face of God. As humans, we've been created to recognize faces. And the ultimate face we were made for is God's. So, the question we must ask is, "Where am I in relationship to God's face?"

Motivation

The book of Jonah is the only time in the Old Testament that a prophet is sent to a people other than Israel. Jonah runs from God because he thinks that the Ninevites are people who only deserve judgement and he knows God desires to be gracious and merciful. He knows what God wants and it isn't what he wants so he refuses and runs as far away as possible.

Jonah is right about two things. The Ninevites were a cruel, murderous people deserving of judgement. And, God does desire to relent in sending judgement on anyone, even those we see as the worst people in the world. But what Jonah was wrong about was himself and his people – that they were somehow less deserving of God's judgement and in less need of God's grace. Jonah hadn't experienced God's grace to the extent that it reconstructed his soul. He knew of God in the abstract, but he didn't know himself or his own heart. Our eagerness to know God's grace for others is an index to the depths we ourselves have experienced it first.

Pursuit

In the second paragraph of our Jonah reading, we see all sorts of things being "hurled" about. God hurls a storm at the ship. The sailors begin hurling cargo overboard in an effort to save themselves. But Jonah does nothing. He does nothing when the consequences of his sin catch up to him. He is deep in sleep brought about by his exhaustion from running. Like Jonah, our sin and disobedience will inevitably wear us out until we have nothing left. Because we are made in the very image of God, to live in ways contrary to Him is also contrary to our being, like running your hand against the grain of the universe. The good news is that our direction can be changed but God has to change it. He has to initiate the change by coming after us.

God sends a storm not to ruin Jonah but to reclaim him. It was not easy, enjoyable, or comfortable for Jonah just as the storms we face are not for us. But it is darkness, sin and evil that longs for us to be comfortable with the things of this world. God desires our good and uses the storms for the good, and often the reclamation, of those who belong to him.