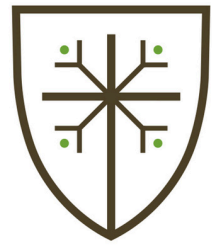


GOD ON THE MARGINS

A story of Jonah, Habakkuk, and Esther

SERMON NOTES



August 31, 2025

SERMON INFO

TITLE
"Under the Waters"

PREACHER
Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

TEXTS
Jonah 1:17-2:10
James 1:1-5
Luke 18:35-43

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jonah is crying out from the belly of a fish that had swallowed him. What might we expect to hear in his prayer that we don't hear?
2. What practices can we form in our lives (either by ourselves or with other Christians) to help "tune our hearts" to God and his word in preparation for the times of rising waters in our lives?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

We are in an 18-week series looking at how God acts "in the margins" of society and of our lives. Tim continued our series this week with Jonah's prayer and the question "What do you do when you're caught in a storm?"

The Cry

The book of Jonah reads like a parable, a story meant to convey a specific teaching or message. Jonah's story is driving us to a crisis of choice, the choice of what to do when the waters close in around you. We don't read anything in Chapter 1 of what happens to Jonah after he is thrown in the waters and before the fish swallows him, but in Chapter 2, Jonah is reflecting back in prayer upon the waters and what happened as he felt them pressing in on him. Quite simply, he prayed. Prayer is the goal and the point of the entire book. God is moving Jonah to pray. This God of the Bible, so big and utterly transcendent, wants this one inconsequential man to pray and respond to him. Everything that happens in your life is intended to bring you to a place of prayer and new life in response to God.

When you are almost drowning, cry out to God and he will hear you. Because the Lord "is gracious and merciful." It is the heart and desire of God to listen to the prayers of undeserving people like Jonah and like us.

The Squeeze

How did Jonah get into the water? The text states that the sailors threw him in, but in his prayer, Jonah says to the Lord, "You cast me in." He knows now that he was never actually alone. He had never truly escaped the presence of God. The Lord was always there watching and waiting and the second Jonah cries out, He is there.

Jonah was squeezed under the pressure of the waters. Trials force everything that is in you out. Whatever is true of us spiritually and morally is forced into the open when we almost drown. For Jonah, this was a cry and a prayer that sounded a lot like the Psalms. It is not one particular Psalm but all of the Psalms, their teaching and truth and the perspective of what it's like to relate to this God in this world. Character is not formed in crisis. It is revealed in crisis, when we get squeezed. Character is formed in the day-in and day-out of what we feed ourselves. If we read the scriptures and nourish ourselves with them, when the waters rise, we are not crushed and a God-shaped character comes out.

The Temple

There is a contrast of presence threaded throughout Jonah's prayer. He is calling out from the belly of Sheol, as far physically as he could possibly be from God's dwelling place, the Temple. But God brought him close through his grace. Grace is an unobligated giver giving to an undeserving person. They let you in. Grace is being let in. That is what we strive for most in the world, to be "let in" with the right person or the right group. We were made for it. Our hearts are structured to need to be let in. But we make the mistake of making these lesser things ultimate things. We were made for only one ultimate giver, God himself.

In Christ, because of who he is and what he's done, you're already in. He is both the presence of God with us and the sacrifice that bears our sins away so that, by God's grace, we can be in.

Jonah's prayer is, ultimately, a prayer of thanksgiving. And the giving of thanks transforms Jonah. He is overwhelmed with thanksgiving for God's grace to him and it pours out of him in his response to God. So we too already have been given everything we need in Christ and our lives are now animated purely by the giving of thanks for God's grace to us.