

The Bible 20/20 Week 32: “Jonah’s Journey” (8-16-20)

Reading this week: Joel-Micah Focus Today: Jonah

Story of Jonah

Chapter 1

- God sends Jonah to (pagan city) of Nineveh - “call out their evil”
- Jonah runs the other way - port city of Joppa boards a merchant ship to Tarshish
- Ship in trouble - ready to break apart in a storm
- After much fear & discussion - Jonah is thrown overboard
- God sends a “great fish” to swallow Jonah - he is in it’s belly for 3 days

Chapter 2

- Jonah’s prayer - he cries out for help in distress
- He is in despair - woe is me, my life is in danger - now I’m remembering God, I’ll do better, etc.
- His prayer - kind of a half repentance & half bargaining prayer
- God has the fish vomit him out on dry land

Chapter 3

- God sends Jonah again - this time Jonah goes to Nineveh
- For 3 days Jonah canvases the city - preaching coming judgement from God
- The people and the king - believe God and repent: fasting, etc.
- God saw they “turned from their evil way” - and he relented from bringing disaster

Chapter 4

- Jonah is angry - he knew God would have mercy & he never wanted that for his enemies
- Jonah sits outside the city - hoping to watch it be destroyed
- Jonah - a plant for shade, a worm destroys, an east wind is harsh (Jonah wants to die)
- God - you pity the plant (which you did not work for, just enjoyed), but not this great city

Conclusion: God asks a question - “Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city?”

Context: Jonah - in the time of the split kingdom, well before the exile (see: 2 Kings 14:25-27)

- Israel is divided and in civil war
- Israel is in conflict with a super-power (Assyria - Nineveh is their capital)
- God’s people are in turmoil - yet, they refuse to repent - despite many prophetic warnings
- God sends Jonah - to their enemy!

Geography:

- **Joppa** (north west of Jerusalem - modern day Jaffa in Tel-Aviv, port city on the Mediterranean Sea)
- **Tarshish** (merchant port - fine metals, Solomon used it for his wealth building)
- **Nineveh** (north east of Jerusalem - modern day Northern Iraq on the Tigris River)

1) Consider Jonah's Heart (Who are you?)

Jonah 1:3 (ESV)

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Note: Runs from God

Jonah 1:4-6 (ESV)

(4) But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. (5) Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. (6) So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

Note: Asleep to the trouble he has brought upon many!

Jonah 2:1-2, 7 (ESV)

(1) Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, (2) saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. . . (7) When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Note: Cries out to God, when he's dealing with the consequences of his running

Jonah 3:10-4:1 (ESV)

(3:10) When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. (4:1) But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.

Note: Jonah is angry that his enemies received mercy (he carried the message of coming judgement)

Jonah is so frustrated that his enemies received grace while his life is still difficult . . .

Jonah 4:3 (ESV)

Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.

- He then proceeds to go outside the city and watch - hoping they will still be destroyed!
- The plant (shade), The worm (destroys the shade), The east wind & hot sun (Jonah is faint)

Jonah 4:8b-9 (ESV)

(8) And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." (9) But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die."

Example: Abby in the pool story - "I love lightning"

2) Consider Jonah's Location - Asleep on the Ship or Preaching in Nineveh (Where are you?)

1st Problem: Headed the wrong direction (we are not to be in the "same boat")

- Everyone on board - for profit, following their own gods.
- When disaster strikes - the ship is gonna break apart and they are looking to place blame!
- Jonah is on board this ship, and is asleep to the problems he has caused

2nd Problem: Carrying the wrong message (self-focused Grace)

a) We want Grace we don't extend to others

- Jonah didn't want to help his enemies - He was too busy condemning them and wrapped up in self-pity
- When he does respond - it's an arrogant explanation that he serves the true God
- Jonah says - "my God is the right God" - but he's running away from that God!!!

b) We offer a False (self-focused) Grace

- It's the false one we have been "enjoying"
- We offer Grace without Truth . . . and that will not save a culture that is drowning!
- **Don't lie to Nineveh** - Jonah doesn't tell them it's gonna be ok, they are great the way they are.

We need the Grace & Truth that God offered to Nineveh - we need it for ourselves, and we need to share it!

3) Consider God's Heart (Full of Grace & Truth)

- God sends Jonah to call out the evil & declare coming judgement (**Jonah 1:2, 3:1-2, 3:4**)
- God extends mercy when there is "true repentance" - turning from evil (**Jonah 3:10**)

God speaks Truth in order that people might receive his Grace . . .

Jonah 4:2 (ESV)

And (Jonah) prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

The Book of Jonah ends with a question (compare to Jesus' parable of the 2 sons in Luke 15) . . .

Jonah 4:10-11 (ESV)

(10) And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. (11) And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Note: God invites his kids to understand true Grace, to receive it & share it!

Conclusion:

Consider Jesus - "One greater than Jonah" (Matt. 12:38-41): buried 3 days, risen to new life, good news of grace & truth preached to the nations!

- We are Nineveh - God's grace has come to us!
- He has sent us like Jonah to the places we don't want to go!

Questions to Ponder:

- Are you on the wrong ship?
- Asleep as it prepares to break apart?
- One more voice amongst a bunch of "gods" who aren't gods - placing blame?
- Arrogantly proclaiming a God you aren't even aligned with?
- Will we hear God's heart for our enemies?
- Or will we be more absorbed in our selfish pursuits?
- What Grace will we carry?
- Have we responded to Grace & Truth, and will we carry that message?

Let's Pray!