

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Jonah
April 23, 2023

Hitting Rock Bottom

Jonah 2

Church, how are we doing? Let's go! Let's go! Let's go! Man, it was an amazing weekend! Thank you, guys, for praying. For the faithful members of Harris Creek who prayed, today say a prayer of gratitude that God was faithful in and through everything that happened in this room throughout the weekend; for our staff and incredible volunteers that just pulled this weekend off. It was just amazing! I know, it is a lot of superlatives because I'm still... (Crowd Cheers) Yeah! I mean give our staff and the volunteers a hand. I still haven't been able to put words to it, but I will. I'm going to soon post about it, and I tried to last night and I just had so many thoughts colliding at once.

Here's my question and where I want to start today. How many of you have been to Schlitterbahn? Alright, OK. Raise your hand if you've never been to Schlitterbahn. Oh man. Oh man. I feel like we should cancel what we were going to do and just like, lay hands on those folks. Just pray for them. I'm so sorry that you've missed out. I mean, it's 2 1/2 hours away. It is one of the most amazing places on the planet, the entire globe! I say one up. That's not true. That's not true. The most amazing place on the entire globe. Like 70 acres of 51 water slides! OK? Somebody asked me recently, "Would you rather go to Schlitterbahn or Disney World?" I'm like, "What a joke! Why would I go to Disney World when it's 2 1/2 hours away?" Voted World's (emphasizes World's) Best Water Park - 24 years in a row. Yeah! 2 1/2 hour away. I mean, for those of you that said you've never been, I mean, get your tickets today. Plan it! This message sponsored by Schlitterbahn. Not really.

Growing up this was like if we had a good year, if we could go on a real vacation, we would go to Schlitterbahn. It was close to the town I grew up in. My sister actually worked there and so she was a lifeguard at Schlitterbahn. So, it was it for me! When I would they would talk about heaven, I'd be like 'Oh yeah, I kind of experienced some of that at Schlitterbahn'.

I think it was probably the first time I went; I was about seven years old. It's not just water slides, it's tube shoots. Now if you haven't seen it, and you're like 'I don't really know what that is. That's like a long water slide - you're in an inner tube. It's kind of like a lazy river downhill for like over 30 or 40 minutes. Yeah! Crazy! You get on this ride, and you are on this ride for a while. It's going to take you places.

So, some of them split off. Some of you are like mind blown - I can see the confusion. You are like, '30 or 40 minutes?' Yeah. So, you're on this lazy river but it's not a lazy river - it's a water slide on an inner tube. It's amazing! It'll split up off - there's like these y's. So, my dad, being wise, as we wait in line he is like, 'Hey, whenever it splits off, stay to the right. Stay to the right.'

That's how we're going to stick together.' Because you know, it's a big place. And so, we get on it. We're on this water slide. Our whole family is going down it. I'm like 7 and I am like "the right?". (JP is trying to tell right from left with his hands.) The whole family is in front of me, and I find myself at the first 'y' and I'm on the left I'm trying to paddle quickly to the right but I don't make it. It throws me down the slide to the left. Again, this is not like 30 seconds and then you're done. You're on it now. And so, I'm going to the left and the family went to the right. I'm going to the left; going to the left, you know 15 minutes go by, still going to the left. I'm thinking I'm never going to see them again. Because when you are 7, you're like, 'Alright, this is what I call the orphanage.' How does this go? It's been real, being a part of that family.

So, it dumps me into the Comal River, this slide does. Yeah, some of you are like, 'I remember that.' Now I'm in the river, surrounded by jungle, floating down the river in an inner tube away from my family. When you get to this part where they pull you out, I look up and there's no one I know around me. I mean tons of people, none of them whom I belong to, right? And so, I find myself in this place that I really don't want to be. I'll say it like this, I found myself in this place far from where I wanted to be and who I wanted to be with. And that's where Jonah is here in chapter 2. He finds himself in this place far from where he wants to be. He's gotten off track and he's trying to get back on track. That's what we're talking about this morning. If you find yourself off track, how to get back on track? This book, written about 800 years before Jesus shows up on the scene, about the prophet Jonah - we're zooming into his life.

Last week, Nate kicked us off talking about how God... It starts out at 100 miles an hour. God comes to Jonah and says go to Nineveh. Jonah says, "No thanks. I'm going to Tarshish." 2500 miles away from where God told him to go. I think we have a map. You can kind of see this was helpful. (Map on Screen) He's in Joppa and God says go to Nineveh - right over there. Jonah says, "No, I'm out." God sends a storm. Jonah is sleeping in the boat. People come to him like they did to Jesus - "How can you sleep at a time like this?" He gets up. They're going to die. He's like, this is my bad. They cast lots. Lots land on Jonah. All signs pointing to Jonah. This is Jonah's fault. Jonah's like, "you got to throw me overboard." They're like, "we don't really want to do that." They try to row to shore - they can't. And why don't they want to throw Jonah overboard? Because that's murder.

See, we have perspective now, but there's not a single human being on the planet Earth thinking, "Hey, we throw you overboard and you live." No one's like, 'I know how this plays out. There's a giant fish going to come and swallow you up. You are going to live in there for three days.' Like nobody! No, they're like "If we throw you overboard in the midst of the storm in the middle of the ocean there's no Coast Guard - you're done." Jonah knows he's done. He's like, "I'd rather die than go over there, right?" And they're thinking, 'Well, what is your God going to do to us if we throw you overboard?' Jonah finds himself in this place where he's gotten off track. And maybe that's you this morning.

I don't know if it's like, 'Man, I'm just not getting the quiet time that I want. I'm not experiencing the intimacy with God.' Or maybe you've sinned, and sin has taken you further than you wanted to go and held you there longer than you wanted to stay and cost you more than you wanted to pay. Maybe, you know we talk about a water park, and you are like that's a joke, I'll tell you in my own life. That is a joke! Because when I think about the times, I really got off track, found

myself in a place far from where I wanted to be – it was addiction, affliction. It was sinful choices that held me captive. Me thinking, ‘I know there is a God, but I sure am not acting like it. I do not know. Maybe that is you. Maybe you are like, “Man, I'm just not where I want to be.”’ Jonah is going to give us hope today.

Sometimes you are here, and you are like, ‘What if I missed God's will for my life?’ You haven't. You have not missed God's will for your life. Here is how I know with certainty - you are alive. There is breath in your lungs. In fact, you are three steps from getting back on track. That's what Jonah is going to model for us. Now make no mistake about it, this story is about Jonah; but there's something that we can learn from it. He's really going to show us three steps to getting back on track when you find yourself off track. That's what I'm going to show you today from this story about Jonah.

I'm going to be in Jonah 2, if you'll turn there. As we move through it, we're going to see how Jonah prayed; how Jonah gave thanks; and how Jonah commits to do all that God asks him to do.

So, they throw him overboard – surely, I'm thinking he's like Lord please don't let me die, please don't let me die, please don't let me die. I mean the winds and the waves are crashing over the boat. The boat is going to be destroyed. These sailors that he doesn't know are like we have got to throw him... OK and they just – one, two, shwew (sound effect of throwing Jonah). Right? He's over. This is parenthetically from him being on the boat to him being in Nineveh in the middle of that he is in a fish. This is the chapter where he's in the fish. He's looking back, he's reflecting on that time, and he's telling us what he did in the fish. Really interesting.

This is what it says, verse one. **From inside the fish...see...Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me.** This is a song, by the way. It's one of the only songs that doesn't appear in the Book of Songs. There's a few of them. This is one of them. **From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listen to my cry.**

If you are familiar with the story of Jonah, there's usually three beliefs about the story of Jonah. One is a minority view that Jonah dies inside the whale and resurrects. So, we see that where it says, **In the realm of the dead**, some scholars will say, ‘Oh he died and there was a resurrection there.’ That does kind of make sense. Like ‘Oh yeah, we have another story of a resurrection. Maybe that's what's happened.’ There's another view that this is allegory, that it didn't really happen. It's something where there's meaning baked into this story that we can draw from. If that is you, and you're like, ‘Hey, I think it's allegory.’ You're welcome here. We love that you're here. You have a home here. I just personally disagree. The reason that I personally disagree is for a few reasons: one, Jesus references Jonah as we saw last week. He says in the same way that Jonah was in the whale, three days and three nights. Jesus seemed to think it's true. But maybe you think, ‘Oh, he's tying it to the allegory. You know it's impossible for somebody to be in a whale three days and three nights and live.’ I've got no problem with you thinking it's impossible. It's impossible to have someone die and come back to life. Right? That's also impossible.

So, God is the God of miracles. God is clearly involved here. Lots of miracles here. The storm is a miracle. The casting lots and them landing on Jonah is a miracle. But we struggle with that miracle because we think, well, that's absolutely impossible. There could be some evidence to the contrary. In 1890 there was a man named James Bartley who was swallowed by a sperm whale. The whale was harpooned, the whale died, and they found him inside of the whale two days later. Very fair for you to be like, how do you know what happened in 1890? Difficult to confirm. I did not see it for myself, but it did become global news. It was news throughout newspapers here in America and even in England. They would tell the story of James Bartley. You are like, 'Yeah, but that's a long time ago.' That is true.

A couple of years ago, a man named Michael Packard was swallowed by a humpback whale. He was completely inside and then the whale spat him back out. He lived through it. He tells the story. In the midst of trying to confirm Michael Packard story, they interviewed someone called Reiner Schmuff. Strange last name, but the reason they interviewed him is because he also was swallowed by a whale, and he has the pictures to prove it. If you look at that red circle there, his legs are actually hanging out of that whale's mouth. He lived to tell the story.

But the reason that people – or one of the primary reasons people - believe this to be allegory is because for a really long time, we had no evidence of a city called Nineveh. So, it was like, 'Oh, you know, Nineveh.' The Bible mentions Nineveh lots of times. Well also in the mid -1800s we discovered a city called Nineveh. Archaeologists found it. So, this is really interesting. I'm just going to read to you directly from GotQuestions. It says,

Some skeptics denied the existence of Nineveh altogether. It's rediscovery in the mid – 1800s proved to be a remarkable vindication for the Bible, which mentions Nineveh by name eighteen times and dedicates two entire books (Jonah and Nahum) to its fate. It is interesting to note where the lost city of Nineveh was rediscovered. It was found buried beneath a pair of hills in the vicinity of Mosul in modern-day Iraq. These mounds are known by their local names, Kuyunjik and Nabi Yunus. Nabi Yunus happens to be Arabic for “the prophet Jonah”.

Imagine this. Jonah is not real because there's no city named Nineveh. Oh, we actually found the city of Nineveh under a hill called 'the prophet Jonah'. The Bible is 10 for 10. The Bible is 10 for 10.

Many times, in history, people will say, “Well, that can't be true because we've never... That person or that emperor... That king...” And lo and behold, there's a coin, there's a city, there's a wall, there's an inscription. We found Nineveh. So, Jonah's got a story. He's got a great, like, you've got a story... You know the one when you get back with your old friends from college, “Remember when! You're crazy. You got arrested. You said that we... We ate that... Went there and it was nuts.” Everybody has got those stories, Jonah wins. He's playing two truths and a lie - one of them is like, 'Well, there was this time where I lived inside a fish for three days.' They are like, “That's the lie”. He's like, 'No that is actually the truth.’ And you're just like, wow - this is the story.

So, then you're like, whoa, bro, tell me, so what did you do in there? What did you do in there? He's like, well, I prayed. I prayed because this is one of the greatest sovereign acts of grace that we have in the Scripture - other than Jesus. You have this man running from God. God chases him, they throw him to his death, they sacrifice him, and God sends a fish by way of salvation to rescue him. My first point:

1) *Jonah prayed.*

He is way off track. He found himself in a place he did not want to be and what did he do - he prayed. In verse one it says plainly, **Jonah prayed**. In verse 2 it says, **“I called for help, and you listened.”** Probably he's reflecting on Psalm 34, which was written before this time. He would have known; **I sought the Lord and he answered me. He delivered me from all my fears.** Prayer is absolutely the first step in the redirecting.

If you have found yourself in a place that's far from where you want to be, the first thing you should do is say “God help me.” I can remember a poster in Algebra class. Algebra class was a place where I needed lots of prayer. Schlitterbahn represented heaven to me, Algebra class represented the other place to me. The teacher had a poster - man of faith - it was a cat hanging by one claw to a rope a long distance beneath it. It said, ‘The shortest prayer anyone can pray’ and underneath it just said in all caps – ‘HELP!’ And I sat there in algebra class and I prayed that a lot! Lord, you have got to help me. You have to help me. I need your help.

I am blown away how many times somebody wants to meet with one of our pastors. They're like, ‘Hey, can we meet?’ We go there, let's put this on the calendar. ‘I've got this problem. My marriage... my kids... our financial situation... my work. Let's get together. First question we ask, “Have you been praying about this?” I mean...no. I did ask my life group to pray. “Have you been praying about this?” It's amazing how crafty the enemy is. We don't pray.

Water slides. 70 acres from my family. It's a joke. I can tell you I have found myself in a place where I didn't want to be, with people I didn't want to be with. I was raised...and I have said this many times up here...I was raised in a Christian home. Lots of church, church every Sunday. I went to church school, and church every Friday. I went to Baptist youth group called Teen Time every Wednesday. We did service projects - all the things. Right. I mean I was the church kid. I went through True Love Waits; I got the ring. Anybody got the ring? I had the ring. You are going to leave me hanging there? Anybody got the ring? (Some folks in the crowd whoop) OK - me and you. Thank you. Thank you my friend. I had the ring. So, then I went to college, and I created all these rules for myself, you know, don't drink, smoke or chew or date girls that do. I mean these kinds of things, right? I'm going to go get on the straight and narrow in college. My parents leave the parking lot and in nine days - in nine days - I broke every single one of those rules in epic proportion. I found myself in this place where I just felt so lonely. I laid in my twin size bed in my on-campus apartment at night, as I was going to sleep, and I began to pray. And it felt like my prayers were bouncing off the ceiling. Nobody's listening. I'm at a fork in the road, right? At that moment I could get back on track or I could continue to run off track. Because in that moment I felt like nobody was listening, my prayers were bouncing off the ceiling, and really, because I had fed my flesh, and because I was committed to not going the way of God,

and because I surrounded myself with the wrong people, because of all of these reasons, I continued. It can't stop at prayer. Start at prayer. Start at prayer! Don't stop at prayer!

We have got three things to do. The second one, let's get it. I'll start in verse 3. **You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled around me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.** He's recalling this moment of utter hopelessness, **I'm going to die, going to die in the ocean. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; [hopelessness] yet [semicolon - a reposition here, a redirect] yet I will look again towards your holy temple.** A statement of faith and belief. You're going to get me through this God! **The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.** Lots of illusions in Jonah to Jesus and many scholars believe the seaweed wrapped around his head is a foreshadowing of the crown of thorns. **To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.** Jonah, a man of God's Word probably reflecting on Psalm 40:2, **He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire - set me on solid rock.** Let me say this real quick, if you are like, 'I don't know what to pray.' Pray Bible. You don't know what to pray, you have got a bunch of prayers just written down right there and bound in a book and on your phone - just pray Bible. It is what Jonah did. **When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.** He says, in my worst trouble I turned to you, Lord. The first person I cling to. **Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.** There are lots of things that you can grasp in time of trouble. Your coping mechanisms; check your bank account again; take an audit of your net worth and your possessions. Index on your relationships - call them up and make sure they still love you. Control your kids. Try to control - you think, "Hey, what's in my control? What's in my control? What's in my control?" Not much... He is saying, "Hey, God's the only thing of sure footing here. He's the one that's not going to let you down.

"But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you... Shouts of grateful praises - very reflective. He is thinking this is what happened? This is what you did God, this is what you did. This is who you are. This is what you did. And so, with shouts of grateful praise I will sacrifice to you. He reflects on God's goodness with gratitude. My second point:

2) *Jonah thanks God for all He did.*

The second thing he did is he thanks God for all that God did - for his faithfulness. Is God faithful? Think about that. You came into this room this morning, you're in church, you sang songs. You know. Right? Is God faithful? Is He trustworthy? Do you trust him? Absolutely, but there are days, right? There are days... It is really the only reason we sin of any kind - we don't trust God. Can we trust him? Are we grateful for what He's done for us? He's done a lot! You know? You have got a lot of things going for you. I mean, every one of you seemed to be clothed, which is awesome. You have clothes to wear. Somehow you got here. That's cool. I don't know how that happened. You might have hitchhiked, maybe caught a ride with a friend but you are here.

You sit in comfortable chairs, central air and heat. It is rainy outside, but we're protected from that. Lots to be thankful for. Do we pause to give him thanks for all of those things? Or do our

worries and concerns and the waves and the storm overshadow the items that we can be grateful for every single day?

Here's some application if you're interested, every day of my life I wake up... I say every day of my life, to make that true, most days of my life I wake up and I write down five things I'm thankful for - five things I'm thankful for. It has been one of the greatest gifts to me just to start my day in the direction of gratitude and reflecting on God's goodness. It has been a tremendous help and any one of you can do it. It's not proprietary, take that and steal it. I just got a journal. It's not sexy. I have a journal, I open it up, and I write things down.

And there are days where the five things flood me. Instantly. It's like I got to stop at five, I want to keep on going. But then there are days like - uhhhhhh house to live in; uhhhhh chair to sit in. This pen... You know? There are some days where it's not there and I'll sit there, and I'll wait for the five things to hit me. You can steal this; you don't have to. I'm not trying to be legalistic. The Bible doesn't say make sure you wake up every day and write five things down. I'm just telling you; it has been a tremendous gift to me. I can look back and see things I don't even remember writing down. Like, 'oh yeah, God is faithful. God is faithful. He is trustworthy.'

Let's talk about in the Bible, where have we seen the faithfulness of God? Let's just start in the Old Testament. This can be a dialogue. Where have we seen God be faithful in the Old Testament? I'll start and then you guys pick up.

- He created the heavens, the earth. That's pretty faithful. That's awesome. Created everything.

What else did he do? What?

- Creation. Yeah, he created everything. It's amazing. Like that's what God did.

What else?

- He parted the Red Sea. So, there's these people and they're enslaved to Egyptians. And He delivers them, but then they get to this sea, and He separates the sea so that they have a way out. Not just that! OK? Not just that, but then their enemies come, and he closes the sea on them. God is faithful.

Where else?

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – there are these three guys, the king is like worship the gold statue - 90 feet tall. They're like, we can't do that. He is like if you don't do that, we are going to throw you in the fire. They are like, 'But you don't understand - my God is faithful! Then it says that there's a fourth one in there, like the Son of God, with them. Protecting them! They come out of the fire; God is faithful.

Where else?

- Daniel - there's another story similar to where they throw Daniel into the den. OK, it's a King Darias now or Darius if you prefer. There are these hungry lions, they haven't eaten for a while. They go and throw Daniel in there and he waits for the next day. He is sleeping - just all good. God is faithful.

Where else?

- Abraham and Sarah - they can't have a baby. 100 years old. Womb is locked. Infertility for a long time. Hahahahaha - you sleep with my maid servant because it's not happening here. Lo and behold, God is faithful.

What did you say?

- Hosea – God is faithful over and over, you see an adulterous generation – like a wife paid to be slept with - and God says, Let me show my faithfulness through your actions.

Where else?

- Job – God is faithful. His family turns on him, friends turn on him, wife turns on him, curse God and die. Boils all over your skin. Everything is stripped away, but God restores it because he is faithful.

What else did you say?

- Joseph was thrown into a pit by his brothers, sold into slavery. God delivered and was faithful,

Where else? One more time.

- Noah and Esther – For Noah, it hasn't rained. Never seen rain. Build a boat in the desert. Hahaha - what are you doing, you crazy old man? Wickedness is overwhelmed in the world. Rains down - his family is preserved.
- Esther, if I perish, I perish. The radical plot against her people to oppress them and destroy them. The Lord makes a way for her into the King's palace. She frees the people. Not just that, but evil is destroyed.
- I heard David and Goliath. The Philistine raises up, a giant mocks God. Your God - is no one going to fight me? You guys are so scared. David shows up with the rock and says, 'Hey, you don't come up against me. I mean, you have a spear and a sword and a helmet. That's cute. I got the God, the creator of the heavens, the earth on my side. Let's go. Our God's faithful!

We can go New Testament. I know we just celebrated Easter; we're going to run to the cross but let's hold off on that for a second. Where else? Where do you see in the New Testament?

- Saul - yeah, man, Road to Damascus, terrorist. Stoning people, women and children. Let's just make him the greatest missionary to ever live.

Where else? One more time.

- Stephen being stoned - He looks up, sees Jesus seated. Well, it was seated at the right hand of God, but he's to his feet now. Standing, saying, hey, I got a place for you buddy.

You said?

- Lazarus is dead. We looked at that a couple of weeks ago. "Hey, Lazarus, come out." Take those grave clothes off and he's not dead anymore.

Where else?

- Mary Magdalene. Yeah. Demons. Depression. Possession. Deliverance.

We could go healing - people see, people heard, people walked who couldn't walk. People talked who couldn't talk. God is faithful. And then you get to this place where God died on a cross. It seems like it's over. A devil does the happy dance. No, but our God is faithful.

When you look back, what we just did right there together, collectively, you and I, what we just did, that's just remembering the faithfulness of God. It's normative to the believer. I think we have to create space for that often. Hey, let's just look. Can we? We're supposed to trust God, but hold on, hold on, hold on – time out. Is he trustworthy? And it's OK to logically respond to that. Is he trustworthy? Well, I don't know, His resume is pretty awesome. Put Him up against anybody else, you know, anybody else more faithful than that? I mean anybody. Who in all of

history can stack up a resume like the one we - you and I - just created for God. The things that He did, and we just listed them and it's normal for the Christian to do this. Totally reasonable to say, "Hold on. I want to trust you. Are you trustworthy?" And so, when you look back, you see the faithfulness of God.

Now here's the deal. Some of you are like, no when I look back, I see the storm. Yeah, but you got through the storm. Consider where you're at right now. No, no, no. I'm in the storm right now. Well, He's going to get you through. He is going to get you through the storm. "Well, it's not going to make sense." Well, it will one day and I'm not trying to make light of your suffering. There's some real suffering, but it will one day.

So, Jonah turns to God in prayer and begins to give Him thanks for all He's done to get back on track. It says here, in verse 9 again, **What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.' And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.** Jonah's off track.

What I appreciate about Jonah in this moment is he's not looking to blame. He's like, "It is on me man. It is all me." Because I'll tell you, a lot of times people find themselves on the other side of the water park and they want to blame the slide, but you went left. Yeah, but I married crazy. But YOU married crazy. But my job and my boss, the one you interviewed and took. Listen, I'm not saying - I want to be very careful here. Listen! I'm not saying that you are in no way a victim, but I am saying that often, often, most often I'll even say, most often, we have something to do with the place where we found us. We are so quick to look at what everybody else did rather than say, OK, what did I do to get me here? What can I take ownership of? What circle can I draw around myself and change everything inside of it? What am I responsible for? Where can I own rather than say, but the water slide pushed me... the current.

My third point:

3) *Jonah agrees to do what God has called Him to.*

He agrees to it. He says I will. He says, 'I'm going to do what I vowed.' This is a promise. This is the thing where Jonah is like, 'OK, God, if you get me out, I will.' And I don't know if you've ever been there. Like - if she's not pregnant... If I'm not pregnant... If I get through this... If we make it..., Would you please, God? I will...

I don't know if you ever made those kinds of deals with God, but that is reminiscent of what's happening here. My mother-in-law, amazing human being, drank alcohol one time in her life. She had two drinks and got so sick. I mean, personally, I think she had the stomach bug, but she would say she was so sick that she made a bargain with God. She said, 'If you will heal me, I'll never drink again.' And she would tell you God healed her and you couldn't pay her to drink a sip of alcohol. She's not going to do it. And I think that's honoring because she kept that promise. I think so many of us, we made those deals with God - if you let me pass algebra class then I'll be a pastor. You know? So many of us make those deals with God and we find ourselves where we're just quick to kind of jump back off track.

Jonah says, "I'm going to do everything you asked me to do." Which is really repentance. I'm turning from this, and I'm turning to you. As I said, I think it's the most tangible picture of grace we have in the scriptures other than Jesus. Nate said last week that this is not a story about a man running from God, but a story about God running after a man. I will add to that and say that I think this is actually a story - or in addition to that - a story of God chasing a people. See you have this really wicked people over here. That's the punchline. God is looking to save them, and Jonah's prejudice runs so deep that he's like, 'I would rather die than even try to save them. I'd rather die in the sea than die by their hands. I don't want to do that.' You might say he's racist. Those people over there - no. I don't want anything to do with them.

Jonah's primary problem is he didn't love lost people. And guys, I think this problem is still very prevalent in the Church today. I want you to understand, if you're here and you're a follower of Jesus Christ - you trusted in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins - you have a calling on your life much like that of Jonah. God has placed you among a people and He wants you to call them to repentance. He wants you to model what it looks like to follow Him and then call others to follow Him. This is a call on your life. I don't know who your people are if it's the city of Waco, McGregor, Lorena, Woodway, Hewitt, Lacy Lakeview, Bellmead. Or maybe you're here, you're a visitor today, and you're going to jump on a plane before the day is over or you're going to get in a car, and you got a road trip in front of you. It's not an accident that you're here because you're about to flood into a city that you call home, with the people that you know and the culture that you're aware of. God has placed the message in your heart to share. Just like Jonah, don't run from it. Don't run from it!

God sent a fish as a means of grace to Jonah, God gave a message as a means of grace to you. Don't run from it.

Every Tuesday we gather as a staff. We pray. We pray for you guys. We pray for what God's doing here and we celebrate stories. We share stories and celebrate God's faithfulness. It's called staff prayer every Tuesday morning - we start the day with that. This Tuesday morning our whole staff came into a room, and I said, "Hey, before we start, I want you all to get in groups of three." They all get in groups of three. I said, "Alright, that's your team and I want each of you to go and share the gospel in our city with someone that you don't know - be back by 10." So, they leave. They rush out of there because they have been around long enough to know there's a prize and a consequence for something here. And so, you'll see three guys walking around without shoes today. They lost. Everyone just kind of runs out of the building. In fact, one of our elders were talking about this. They saw this happen and they said it was so crazy just to see the entire staff flooded to their cars and flood into the city with this message of the Gospel. Going to Walmart, HEB, and Harris Creek Grocery and just all gas stations and Starbucks just with the message of the Gospel. Sharing the gospel. They said, "What if Sunday was like that?" What if that is what's going to happen here in a minute? That is what's going to happen here in a minute.

Flashflood - you are going to leave, go get in your car and go somewhere. You are either going to go to a home that is right beside your neighbors and on the street. Other people, you are going to go to a restaurant with servers. You go to a meeting tomorrow; you are going to wake up and go to work. I want you to share the Gospel with someone that you don't know. Crazy! You could even say, "Hey, this is just an assignment from church - just coming from church." I just want to

remove all of the things that the enemy is going to give you – ‘Hey, that's weird.’ ‘It's going to hurt the faith.’ ‘People think that's strange.’ I think if you just tell them how much God loves them, that He paid their way into eternity with Him. I don't think it's weird. I think it's actually really loving. I think it's God's calling on our life, much like it was the prophet, Jonah. That we would flood out of this place and that we would engage someone far from God with the greatest story that has ever been told.

I think we are all kind of like Jonah, like we're all running from that call in our lives in some ways. God loves the people in the carpool line and in your favorite coffee shop? People in your corporations and in your communities.

In summary, how do we get back on track? We pray. We acknowledge all that God has done for us. And we agree to do all that He asks us to do. It's interesting, right? This is kind of the path to salvation; this is how you got here if you're Christian. Essentially, how faith starts. God, I acknowledge that I'm a sinner and that I've been running from you. And then you say, God, I know what you've done for me, that you sent your son Jesus to die for my sins, and you raised him from the dead. Like you did that God. And God now would you give me your Holy Spirit so that I can be obedient and faithful to do everything you've called me to do?

God is so faithful. God is so faithful. Can you imagine being in the mind of a 7-year-old, 70 acres away from their family, in a water park surrounded by tens of thousands of people - none of whom they know? You just feel like you're going to be lost forever. You are so far from where you want to be. But get in the mind of the Father. He gets off that tube shoot somewhere far from his son. What's he thinking about? I can tell you, having lived it, what he didn't do. What he didn't do is he wasn't like, “Man, I told him to go right. You know y'all pack up. He's got to learn.” We are going to leave him here. He didn't do that. What he didn't do is like, “Alright, hey listen. Yeah, he didn't go right. So, we're not going to let him ruin our time. Let's just keep going. Let's do the next ride. We'll see him if we see him.” He didn't do that.

He said, “Where is he? I bet he went left. Let's go get him. Let's split up, you go that way and I'll go this way. Look this way. We will find him. Let's meet back here at this time. OK? Let's go get him.” Right? That's the heart of God. That's my earthly dad, an imperfect dad. The heart of the father. You think you're running from God and He is like, “Oh no, they're running from me.” Send a fish. Send a fish.

Just stop, pray, acknowledge all that He's done for you, and then do everything He asks. Do it right now. Right now. And while you are a long way off, He sees you. He gets up and He runs to you. Throws His arms around you, puts a ring on your finger, kisses you on the neck. Throws a party. Says this child of mine was lost, but now they are found. I am going to restore them to the estate. That is what He does.

Let's pray right now. Why not? You should pray. I always pray here, but you should pray.

Ask God where you are far from Him. Where have you been running? Where have you gotten off track? It may just be that you have not done this in a long time. Honestly, you may look back at yesterday and be like ‘Man, I didn't stop and talk to God for extended period of time.’ So do

that right now. Don't be distracted. Don't hear babies crying or people coughing or paper shuffling or wonder what your neighbors are saying. You talk to God. You talk to God right now. Be talking to Him right now. Try to stay focused, make it a game. Not going to let anything pull me off course. Nothing is going to distract me. Everything that comes to my mind right now is going to be my thoughts to the creator of the heavens and the earth. Talk to God.

If you can stay there, don't even think about what I'm saying, just keep talking to Him. Ask Him who He wants you to share with. Who is in your life that you know you're supposed to share the Gospel with them, but you just haven't because it's weird. Awkward. Maybe tell Him something that He's done that was faithful that you can just thank you, God, you did this for me. Thank you. Stay focused. Keep talking to God. Maybe ask Him where He's asked you to do something, but you haven't been listening. Say 'Hey, would you bring that to mind right now? Is there something you wanted me to do but I just haven't done it?' Maybe ask Him to give you the courage to do everything that He would want you to do. Keep talking to Him. Stay focused talking to God.