

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Nate Hilgenkamp
Series: Jonah
April 16, 2023

You Can Run, But You Can't Hide

Jonah 1

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.” Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.”

They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?” “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him. Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Today is my daughter’s second birthday. (*Audience cheers.*) I assume you brought gifts. If not, we have a seven o’clock [service], and you’ve got plenty of time to go to the store and come back. I’d appreciate it.

I can’t believe she’s already two. There’s so much about her that just impresses me. She can count to 20, sometimes. She knows the ABCs all on her own. In fact, she even knows Scripture. Check this out! (*Video plays.*)

Nate: “The Lord is my _____.”

Jacie: “shepherd.”

Nate: “I shall not _____.”

Jacie: “want.”

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Nate: “He makes me _____.”

Jacie: “happy!”

(Nate and audience chuckle.) Okay, she *kind of* knows Scripture.

But, there’s something about her that’s not that impressive. I know, she’s two, but she’s *got* to get better at this! There’s this one thing in her life—we like to play hide and seek. She not very good at hiding. What will happen is that I’ll count to ten, and once I get to ten, she’s already run all the way over from one room into the kitchen. Where she hides: she finds the middle of the kitchen, and she will just lay down like this. *(Nate crouches down on his hands and knees and covers his eyes with his hands.)* She thinks that, because she can’t see me, I can’t see her. Meanwhile, I’ll walk up right next to her, saying, “Where’s Jacie? Where’s Jacie?” I don’t have the heart to tell her I’m staring right at her! There’s nothing in between me and her! She’s in full view of me. She’s not hiding at all from me! Here’s what I’ve learned about my daughter: she can run from me, but she can’t hide from me. That’s where we’re going this morning. When it comes to your heavenly Father, you can run, but you can’t hide from Him.

Some of you, this morning, have come in hiding. I think, this morning, He wants to do some finding. Some of you—in fact, many of us, if not all of us—have been hiding in certain areas of our life, hoping our heavenly Father doesn’t see us, because internally, spiritually, this is what we look like: *(Nate returns to his hands and knees, hiding his eyes with his hands.)* “I know I’ve got this sexual sin, but if I stay right here, maybe He won’t address it. If I just don’t move, maybe nothing will happen.” Or, “I know I don’t speak kindly, in a patient way, to my spouse, but maybe if I just hide like this, maybe nothing will change.” Or, “Maybe if I just don’t move, He won’t see the way I’m spending my money. It’s all on me, me, me, me, and I’m never generous with it. Maybe He won’t address it if I just don’t move.” Or, “If I just don’t move, maybe He won’t see the book I’m reading, or the shows I’m watching, or the music that I’m listening to, because I know He doesn’t like them, but I really like them, and I just don’t want to change.” *(Nate gets up.)* Here’s my prayer this morning. My prayer this morning is that you would hear your heavenly Father say, “Ready or not, here I come!” He loves you too much to leave you there. *(Nate points to where he previously crouched.)* He wants to uncover every single hidden area of your life, because when you run away from Him, He knows that you’re running away from peace. You’re running away from rest. You’re running away from His love, and it’s not best for you! In your running, He’s going to track you down!

That’s what we’re going to learn as we’re opening up a brand-new series on the book of Jonah. If you have your Bibles, you can open up there right now, to Jonah. We’ll be in Chapter 1 today, and if you’ve been in church for a while, you probably know about the story of Jonah. Maybe you saw it on *Veggie Tales* because Jonah is a famous book. The details might be a little fuzzy for you, but you know that Jonah was called by God; he ran away from God; he was swallowed by this whale. After that, you’re not really sure what happens next. I hope this sermon series reframes the way you see the Book of Jonah.

First, he actually probably wasn’t swallowed by a whale. He might have been, but it says in Scripture that he was swallowed by a big fish. We’ve just turned that into a whale. It might have

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been a whale, but it just says that it was a big fish. The second thing we need to reframe about the book of Jonah is this—and this is far more important: the book of Jonah is not primarily about a man who ran away from God. The book of Jonah is primarily about a God who ran after that man. The book of Jonah is not about a fish; it's about God's faithfulness. It's about God pursuing His people. That's what we're going to read as we enter into this brand-new sermon series, and that's what we're going to see today. If you have your Bibles—Jonah, chapter 1. It's in the second half of the Old Testament, in with some minor prophets.

Let's see what Jonah says in verse 1: **The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.**

Here's what we know about Jonah. Jonah was actually mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, in 2 Kings 14: 25. It says that Jonah was a prophet of the Lord over the people of Israel; he was even an advisor to the king. In this moment, what happens is that Jonah is a prophet and he hears this word from the Lord, saying, "Arise, Jonah, and go to Nineveh and preach against them." But that was a problem for Jonah, because, at the time, Nineveh was the biggest city on earth. It was the capital of Assyria. Assyria was the bitter rival of Israel, because, and this isn't an exaggeration, the people of Assyria, at that time, were some of the worst people who have ever existed. I'm not going to tell you everything that they did, not just because we have kids in here, but because it wasn't good for my heart to read it. I'm going to tell you a few things, and even these things are shocking. What they would do is, as they would conquer a city, they would cut off all the limbs of the people they had conquered except for one arm and hand. They would shake that person's hand as they were dying. It's creepy, weird stuff. They'd also take those people, and they'd stretch them out, skin them alive, and they'd put that skin on the wall of their city. I could go on, but I won't. It actually gets worse. That's who these people were. Meanwhile, God says, "Hey, Jonah, go and preach to them." Jonah says, "Thanks, God, but no thanks! I'm not going."

John Calvin, a theological giant in Church history, has this to say about Jonah: he calls out Jonah for his "disgraceful obstinacy." I didn't know what that word was, so I had to look it up. It means stubbornness. His "disgraceful stubbornness." I don't know. I mean, it's easy to look at Jonah and throw stones, but I get it! I wouldn't want to go to a place that's going to filet me like a fish! I would not want to do that either. Another theological giant, a former pastor and author named Tim Keller, said this call to Jonah to preach to Nineveh would be like asking a rabbi in 1941 to go to the streets of Berlin and preach against the Nazis. This had virtually no chance of success and an incredibly high chance of death, so Jonah didn't want to go.

He went down to where the boats are, got on a boat to Tarshish, and ran away from the Lord. I actually never knew where Tarshish was until this week, so here's where Tarshish is on a map. (*A map of the Mediterranean area appears on the screen. Tarshish is 2500 miles northwest of Joppa, while Nineveh is 550 miles northeast of Joppa.*) It's actually in Spain. It's 2500 miles away from Joppa. Meanwhile, Nineveh was a whole lot closer. It would have been an easier journey. It was just 550 miles away from where Jonah was. Why does Jonah go to Tarshish? Because that's as *far* away as he could possibly go. In that day and age, that is an eternity away.

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In that day and age, that was the end of the earth. This is why he chose to go to Tarshish, because he's trying to hide from God. He's running away! He's not just saying, "God, I don't want to go to Nineveh and preach against them." He's saying, "God, I don't even want to stay in Joppa and continue to do my job, because if this is what it means to follow you, I'm done. I'm running!" He's trying to go to a place where God can't catch up to him. He says, "If this is what it means to follow you, I'm done, because I don't want to do what you've asked me to do." This is the first thing we can learn from Jonah, Chapter 1.

1. *Jonah Knew What God Wanted, But Did What He Wanted*

I actually feel that God could have prevented this, because He could have told Jonah more than what He told him. In verse 2, this is what God tells Jonah: He says, **"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."** That's it. He doesn't say—which would have been helpful if He did—He doesn't say, "Go to Nineveh, and, by the way, nobody's going to kill you. You're going to be fine. And I know you don't like the Ninevites, but they're going to repent of their sin. There's going to be a book of the Bible written about you and people are going to know about your faithfulness for generations to come." He doesn't say that. All He says is, "Arise, and go to Nineveh." That just made Jonah, since he lacked some information, it made Jonah fear what *might* happen because God didn't tell him what *will* happen. Why? Why did God do that? It's because God wants His Word to be good enough. JP says something like this all the time. "God doesn't want us to determine the outcome before we choose to be obedient." God wants our "yes" before He tells us His "why" because He wants us to be primarily following Him, not primarily following an outcome. He wants us to follow what He wants and not what we want.

If point 1 is that Jonah knew what God wanted and did what he wanted, we could replace that with all of our names. It very easily could be, "Nate knew what God wanted, but did what he wanted." I bet you've seen this in your life. For you, maybe you know what God has called you to do with your money, but you just don't really like it. You don't see how the end results of that could be for your good, so you just don't do it. You know what God wants you to do, but you just do what *you* want to do. Or, you know that God wants to make Himself the primary part of your family—the thing that your family uplifts more than anything—but you really, really like sports. So, you talk about sports, spend all your time on sports, spend all your money on sports. You know what God wants you to do, but you just want to do what *you* want to do. Or, you know that God has called you to share the Gospel with people in your life, but, just like Jonah, you're afraid it's going to get really uncomfortable for you, so you don't. And since you know what God wants you to do, you just do what *you* want to do.

I bet we don't want that to be our story. I bet for the vast majority of us here today, we want to follow God. We want to be faithful, but we also want to be comfortable. And many times, God's commands will make us choose. Do you want to be faithful or do you want to be comfortable? Here, Jonah chooses comfort over faithfulness. I know that, so often, for me, I can make the same decision. I want to be comfortable more than I want to be faithful, and when I do, it will just take me down.

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In fact, I want to show you one other part of the passage before we move on. This is a part of the passage the author would have wanted us to see. Here, God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah runs away from God, and in his disobedience, we see the same word over and over and over again. In these few verses, I'm going to use the ESV, because the ESV is a more accurate word-for-word translation. The NIV is more phrase-for-phrase. It can be easier to read, but sometimes it doesn't do a great job of telling us the exact word that was used in the Hebrew. So, I'm going to read from the ESV here in verse 3: **“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.”**

Verse 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.”**

Now, contrast that with the first word that God speaks to Jonah, and I wish this was in the NIV. It's not, but I wish it was, because it's actually in the Hebrew. The ESV has it there, because the very first word that God speaks to Jonah is, **“*Arise, go to Nineveh.*”** What happens is that God says, “Arise.” Jonah says, “No,” and he goes down, down, down, down. This is what sin will do for you. When you choose to disobey God, it will just take you down, down, down, down. Some of you are there this morning. You have sinned, and in that sin, it has created a momentum of disobedience. It's taken you to the lowest point of your life. But here's what I want you to know: even there, God can find you. You can run from Him, but you can't hide from him, because one of the primary things we can learn from the book of Jonah is that it's not primarily about a man running from God, but about God running towards that man. We're going to see more of that here. Let's keep reading.

Verse 4: **“Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? **Get up** (So interesting! This is the same word that God used when He called Jonah. God says, “Arise!” Jonah goes down, down, down, down. God send this sailor to say, “Get up, Jonah! Arise!”) **and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.**” Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.”** These sailors are superstitious. This isn't something that God would ask us to do, but this is something that God can still work in. What casing lots would mean is something like this: they would have dice with a number correlating to each person on the ship. They would roll the dice, and the dice landed on Jonah. This is what happens next: **“So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” This terrified them and they asked, (this part is hilarious!) “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm**

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down for us?” “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

Jonah knows what God wants him to do, but instead he does what *he* wants to do. In running from God, he encounters a storm that is so strong that even these professional sailors grow scared. They begin to call on the name of each of their own gods and, then, they do something dramatic for a sailor. They take the cargo on the ship and throw it overboard. As they’re doing that, what they’re doing is they’re throwing their paycheck overboard. It’s because they were so afraid of dying that they were willing to give up their whole livelihood. This is how bad things were, and the only reason things were this bad was because of Jonah. His disobedience had caused this. His rebellion had caused the storm.

This week, I was working out at a place called Hot Worx, which me and all the moms of Woodway just really enjoy. It’s great! I have a great time there. What you do is this: you have to sign up for a slot; they start at a specific time. There are these workouts and saunas. This week, I was about two minutes late, which is a problem. So, I pull up really fast into the parking lot and park my car next to another car. I’m about to get out; I’m late already. The person next to me gets out of their car; they had backed in. They get out of their car and open the door so I can’t get out, and then they start cleaning their car! She’s just bending over cleaning up all the mess in her car, and I can’t get out. I’m like, “What are you doing? I’m already late, and you’re keeping me in my car!” In that moment, I’m reading the book of Jonah and writing this sermon on Jonah. “God, what sin have I committed that this would happen to me?” This is important. What Jonah is *not* telling us: it’s *not* telling us that every difficulty in your life is a result of sin. What it *is* telling you is that every sin you commit will bring you difficulty because every sin has a storm attached to it. You cannot sin and assume that you can live apart from the effects of your sin because every sin has a storm attached to it. And that’s the second thing we can learn from the book of Jonah:

2. *When You Sin, Things Won’t Go Whale for You*

(Audience laughs with Nate.) Man, I thought that joke would ‘krill.’ (More chuckles.) Okay, that’s not the real second point. Here’s the real second point:

2. *Jonah’s Sin Impacted Everyone in the Boat*

Jonah’s sin impacted everyone in the boat. Jonah was the one who was disobedient, but it impacted everyone on the ship, because you never sin in a vacuum. The choices that you make don’t just impact you; they impact everyone who’s around you. In high school, I went on a kayak with some friends, and we got to the middle of the lake. Once we got to the middle of the lake—there were four of us—two people decided that they wanted to tip over the kayak, which made no sense. Me and my other buddy said, “If you tip the kayak, we can’t just get back in! It’s done! Don’t tip it over! We’re going to be stuck in the middle of the water!” It didn’t matter what me and him wanted to do; what mattered is what the other two wanted to do, because as they kept

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swaying the kayak, they eventually tipped us over. Since they wanted to tip us over, *I* was going to get tipped over! It didn't matter if I didn't want to get wet; I was going to get wet, because their choices impacted me.

I bet you've seen this in your life, because your mom's alcoholism didn't just impact her. It impacted everyone in her boat. Your dad's affair didn't just impact him. It impacted everyone in his boat. Our choices affect the people in our life, for better or for worse. So, this morning, think about who are you doing life with. Who's in your boat? Maybe for you, it's your spouse, or your kids, or your roommates, your neighbors, your co-workers. Who's in your boat? You've got to know this. The choices that you're making right now are impacting the people in your boat, for better or for worse.

Parents, your materialism, right now, is impacting your kids. It is creating a love for the world in their heart. Employees, your love for gossip is creating a culture of gossip at your workplace that's bringing your workplace down, down, down, down, down. College students, your addiction to pornography will affect your future spouse. I know, for me, my self-centeredness affects my wife, my daughter, my co-workers every single day, because the choices that we make impact the people around us, for better or for worse.

If this is you—if you've been running from God, if you've been trying to hide from God, if you've been willfully sinning, if you've been asleep at the wheel—I think God wants to say, “Wake up!” Maybe you feel like your sin isn't impacting you, but it's impacting the people around you! It's affecting their life for the worse. I want to make clear—Romans 8:1 is *so* true: if you are in Christ, **“there is therefore now no condemnation for those [of us] who are in Christ Jesus.”** It doesn't say there are no *consequences* for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. If you are willfully sinning, even if you don't feel its effects, it's impacting the other people in your life. Would you wake up and turn from your sin, just for the sake of the people in your boat? If you want to bless the people in your boat, here's what you can do. I'm convinced the best thing you can do for the people in your boat is this: faithfully and fully follow Jesus. That's the best gift you can give to the people in your boat; it won't just impact you, it'll impact them. Our decisions have a ripple effect. This is the second thing we can learn in this story. Point 2: Jonah's sin impacted everyone in the boat.

Let's keep reading. Going back to verse 12, it says this: **“Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.’ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him. Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”**

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After studying this passage, I read this passage—this part of the passage—very differently than I did a week ago. A week ago, I would have characterized all of this as punishment to Jonah. Now when I read this, I just see that it's dripping with grace. The third thing we can learn from this chapter is this:

3. *Jonah Couldn't Outrun God's Grace*

Jonah couldn't outrun God's grace, because there's grace all over the place in this part of the chapter. First, there is grace for the sailors. Think about how ironic this is. Jonah got on a boat to Tarshish so that he could flee from telling pagans about God. In the middle of his fleeing from telling pagans about God, God makes him tell pagans about God. This is what happens in verse 16: **“At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.”** This is what God does. He takes what was meant for evil and turns it into good. What happens here is that Jonah ran because he didn't want God to save lost people. God said, “Okay, if that's the case, it looks like I'm just gonna go save some more lost people!” One of the primary things we can learn from this passage is that God is pursuing rebellious pagans. One of the other lessons we can learn from this story is God is pursuing the rebellious religious. God doesn't just have grace for the sailors, but grace for Jonah. I always saw the storm and the fish as punishment for Jonah. But, if God truly wanted to punish Jonah, what would He have done? He would have let him get to Tarshish. He would have let him just keep running. In verse 3, it says that Jonah wanted to run away from the Lord. The cruelest thing that God could have done is to let Jonah run away from His presence.

Last Saturday, we had an Easter service here with a bunch of inflatables and food for kids. I was with my Life Group, and I was hanging out with one of the small kids in my Life Group. He just looked at me and started sprinting towards the road. I don't really know why, but that's what happened. What would have been the least loving thing I could do? Just let him run. But because I care about him, I ran after him, picked him up, and brought him back to his father. This is what God is doing in this passage. He's seeing Jonah run to danger, so He sends a storm to pick him up and bring him back to Himself. You've got to understand: this storm was not meant for retribution, but for restoration. In the middle of this storm, Jonah is thrown into the sea and the waves are calm. We see this in verse 17: **“Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah.”** You see, that fish wasn't punishment for Jonah, but provision for Jonah. What God could have done is He could have said, “Okay, you're going to disobey? You're gonna throw yourself into the sea? I'm gonna let you drown, and I'm gonna use somebody else.” But that's not what's happening here. He's not saying, “Okay, Jonah, in your sin, as a punishment for your sin, I'm gonna make you smell a little fishy.” What He's doing here with the fish, is He's saying, “Okay, Jonah, you've sinned and I'm gonna show you that in the middle of your unfaithfulness, I'm still faithful. As you run, I'm gonna run after you.”

Another interesting thing that I found out this week—I've come to *love* this part of the story—we can't say with 100% certainty what the name “Nineveh” means, but our best guess for what the name “Nineveh” means is “House of Fish.” I love this! God tells Jonah, “Hey, go to The Fish.” In this moment, this is God saying, “Okay, you're not gonna go to the middle of The Fish on

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your own? I'm gonna send you there myself." In this moment, God is gracefully reminding Jonah who's in charge.

You see, Jonah is not a story of Jonah running away from God, but a story of God running towards Jonah. In His grace, God will send a storm to rock the boat. He'll send a sailor to wake you up. He'll send a fish to swallow you up—just to bring you back to Himself. He's too good to leave you in your hiding.

So, in summary:

1. *Jonah Knew What God Wanted, But Did What He Wanted*
2. *Jonah's Sin Impacted Everyone in the Boat*
3. *Jonah Couldn't Outrun God's Grace*

To close, I want to compare this story with another story in Scripture. I think God wants us to do this. I think God wrote Scripture in a way—through the power of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Holy Spirit—I think there's another story in Scripture that is written to make us remember the story of Jonah. These two stories are incredibly similar. They follow in almost identical plot lines. It's a story in Mark 4. Maybe you've heard it before. It's the story of Jesus calming the wind and the waves on a boat. If you don't remember all the details, let me just compare the two stories for you.

Mark 4:37 – A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

Jonah 1:4 – Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

Mark 4:38 – Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Jonah 1:5, 6 – All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."

Mark 4:39 - He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Jonah 1:15 - Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

Mark 4:41 - They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

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Jonah 1:16 - At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

You see, these two stories follow a very similar plot line. Much of it is the same except one thing. Did you notice what's missing in Jesus' story? Jonah sacrificed himself to save everyone on the boat. Jesus didn't—yet. Jesus' life would be the ultimate Jonah story. Jesus' life would fulfill the Jonah story. Jesus' life would prove that He is the better and truer Jonah. In fact, Jesus said this in Matthew 12: **“4For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”** Jesus was the ultimate Jonah because He, too, was sacrificed. The difference was this: He wasn't sacrificed for His own sin, but for our sin. When Jesus was willingly thrown up onto the cross, He was willingly thrown into the storm. He was willingly thrown under the waves of sin and death, the ultimate storm that could take us out for all of eternity. He tossed Himself into it, and just like Jonah, He, too, would be saved, not by a fish, but by His own power. Three days later, He would walk out of that grave having calmed the storm, and as He did, He killed your death. He defeated what wanted to defeat you. He broke what wanted to break you.

Friends, this morning, you've just *got* to hear this: if you've been running from God, if you've been hiding from God, if your sin has caused a storm in your life, what you don't need to do is atone for your sin. What you don't need to do is throw yourself into the storm to calm the storm. What you need to do is you need to throw yourself upon Jesus, who's already calmed your storm. It doesn't matter what you've been hiding. It doesn't matter how long you've been running. Even though you've been running away from Him, every day of your life, He's been running after you. You can run from Him, but you can't hide from Him. Let me pray that He'd find you this morning.

Father, thank you for the story of Jonah. There's so much to this story we can learn. We can learn a lot about our character. But most importantly, God, we can learn a lot about your character. When you see us running, you don't just let us go, you chase us down and pursue us because you love us too much to leave us. Father, would this story just grow our hearts for you, grow our affections for you? Would we see your character as it truly is: a God of love who wants to track us down in our hiding and in our sin? God, in the midst of our storm, I pray that you would wake us up. I pray that you would wake us up to the effects that our sin is causing on ourself and also the effects that it's having on the people around us. Would we turn from our sin and throw ourselves into you, the one who can make us safe? The one who can calm the storms in our life? God, I pray that we would be a church that doesn't look like Jonah. That when you ask us to do something and our choice is between faithfulness or comfort, I pray that we choose faithfulness every single day of the week because we want to follow you. We don't want to follow ourselves. God, thank you so much for this story that ultimately points to Jesus and Jesus' death and resurrection for us. Our storm can be forever calm because of what you've done, because Jesus is alive and with us and for us. We want to worship Him now. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.