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*In the Belly of the Fish*

Pastor Kris Brenes

**What is God doing?**

And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah 1:17

- Sometimes God uses the tight space to discipline us.
- Sometimes God uses the tight spaces to teach us to trust Him.

**What does Jonah do?**

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish... Jonah 2:1

**Jonah calls out to God.**

"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. Jonah 2:2

- You're never too far away from God that if you call to Him, He can't hear.

**Jonah acknowledges God's discipline.**

For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your breakers and your waves passed over me. <sup>4</sup>Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' Jonah 2:3-4

- God's discipline is correction, not rejection.

The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head. <sup>6</sup>To the roots of the mountains I went down, to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. Jonah 2:5-6

**Jonah remembers the LORD.**

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you... <sup>9</sup>But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord! Jonah 2:7, 9

- Shift your focus to the One who is in control.

**Tight, uncomfortable space isn't wasted space.**

- Call out to God, the One who is in control.

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**Let's Talk About It**

In Jonah 2, God used the tight, uncomfortable space of the belly of a fish to get Jonah's attention and work something in him. He does the same with us as well. Jonah's disobedience brought painful consequences, but God's loving discipline was meant to correct him, not reject him. Even when Jonah couldn't see what God was doing or control his circumstances, God was still at work. In the darkness, Jonah called out to God, remembered His faithfulness, and experienced His mercy. When we find ourselves in situations we can't control or understand, Jonah reminds us to remember the Lord, shift our focus to the One who is still in control and thank Him for His faithfulness and mercy.

Jonah 1:17-2:10; Psalms 120:1; 3:4; 16:10; 31:22; 69:1; 142:3; 143:4; 31:6; 116:14

**Discussion questions:**

- Which part of the message impacted or challenged you?
- Read Jonah 1:17-2:2. Jonah's choices led him into a difficult place. How can we tell the difference between experiencing the natural consequences of our choices and simply going through a difficult season?
- Jonah waited until he was desperate before calling out to God. Why do you think we sometimes try everything else before turning to God?
- Read Jonah 2:3-6. How are God's love and grace shown through His thorough discipline? How does seeing God's discipline as correction, not rejection change the way you view God when you've messed up or disobeyed Him?
- Read Jonah 2:7-10. Jonah *remembered the Lord* and prayed using words from the Psalms. How can knowing Scripture help us when we're in a season when we can't see what God is doing?
- What does it look like to shift your focus from your circumstances to God? What tends to consume your attention when life feels out of control? What would it look like to surrender that and shift your focus to God?

**Take a Step**

- Is there a "tight space" in your life that you can't control or fully understand? What might trust in God look like in that situation this week?

**Here's My Prayer**

Lord, thank You that even in the tight places, You are still at work. Help me receive Your correction, trust You when life feels beyond our control, and remember Your faithfulness while I wait. Shift my focus from my circumstances to You and use every season to make me more like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.