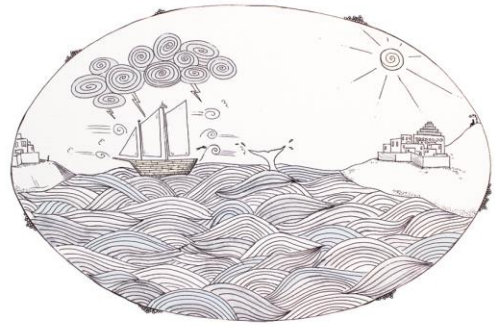


# JONAH

When God loves people more than you do.



## Week Two: When God *Lets* You Sink

Text: Jonah 1:4-17

### Intro

Last week we saw Jonah's utter rebellion towards God's instruction to go to Nineveh. This week we see that despite Jonah's attempt to run away, God relentlessly pursued him, even though he could have called someone else to do the job.

### 1. God, In His Grace, Can Send Storms AND Calm Storms

We tend to think that God only sends us into easy and comfortable situations, but this account shows us that God does in fact sends storms and trials into our lives, at times, to accomplish his purposes. For some of us, this can be a sobering thought, but it is also important to see that in sending the storm, he also gifted Jonah his grace and preserved his life.

God sent the storm to accomplish:

- **His Task** – God wanted Nineveh to be confronted and to repent of their sin, and at the same time he wanted Jonah to be obedient and to fulfill his plan. But not only that, God was also at work within the salvation story of the sailors Jonah encountered on his way to Tarshish.
- **His People** – God also had work to do in Jonah's heart. He may have been a chosen prophet, but he was selfish and rebellious, and God loved him too much to leave him in that state.

- ❖ Q: Why do we find it so difficult to accept that it was GOD who sent the storm into Jonah's path?
- ❖ Q: If God is a gracious God, what can we deduce about the storms that he intentionally sends into our lives?
- ❖ Q: In what way it is comforting to know that not all storms are an attack on us, but actually directed by God?

### 2. We Show Our Understanding Of Grace In The Way We Respond To The Storms

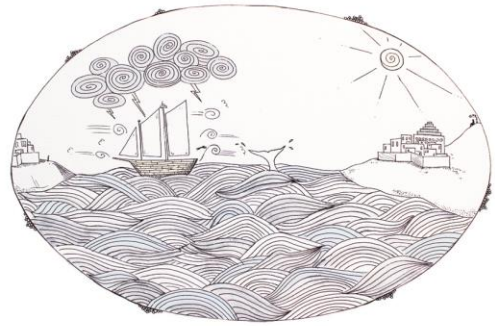
As this massive storm hit, it is clear that these seasoned mariners had not experienced a storm of this magnitude before, and it was far beyond their control. In fear for their lives, they became extremely anxious. They scrambled for any and every solution. They tried to call out to their gods, they tried to lighten the ship's load, and then hoped Jonah would have a solution with his own god, of whom they became afraid. When nothing seemed to work, they continued to try, with their own strength, to get the boat to shore. But unbeknownst to them, they were literally fighting against the strength of God, which was just as futile as Jonah trying to run from the presence of God.

Many of us seem to go through life in a fairly relaxed manner. But comfortable seasons do not reveal the true nature of our faith in Christ. The true test is revealed when we are put under extreme pressure or in pain of some sort. When trials arrive on our doorstep that are not controllable or easy to eliminate, we tend to deal with them in a variety of faithless ways:

- i. Fear – in realizing our total powerlessness we turn into a nervous wreck instead of turning to God.
  - ii. Self-Help – we try every solution possible before thinking of turning to God and asking him for the solution.
  - iii. Escapism – we delude ourselves and pretend there is no problem, or we refuse to deal with it and put our "heads in the sand".
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iv. Religion – we try to do what we think God wants in order to *save ourselves*. This is not dependence on God, but an attempt to appease God.

- ❖ Q: What do you find interesting about the fact that the sea experts were out on the deck freaking out, while Jonah was inside sleeping?
- ❖ Q: Why is it true to say that it is only in times of real trial that we can see the *true* nature of our faith being revealed?
- ❖ Q: In which of the faithless ways mentioned above, do you usually behave when unmanageable trials arrive in your life, and why do you think that is? (i.e. fear, self-help, escapism, religion)

### 3. God, In His Grace, Exposes What Is Hidden And Covers What Is Revealed

Read Jonah 1:9, 12, 15

The situation was dire, and in being confronted by the mariners, Jonah admitted who he was and what he had done. He was a Hebrew, a believer in Yahweh, and he had been running from God's presence the whole time, and was the sole cause of the violent storm. He owned his sin before the people who were now paying for it with their own lives. In that moment of bringing his sin out into the open, God's grace began to work in the story, and things began to change. Jonah's posture immediately changed when he finally owned his rebellion and he then put the sailors' lives above his own, knowing that he should pay the price for his own sin. God could have justly allowed Jonah to drown there and then, but he didn't. Not only did he save the mariners from certain death, he also provided for Jonah to be rescued, albeit in an unusual way. At the crisis moment, God provided his grace for all of these faithless men.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think it was so important that Jonah owned his sin of rebelling against God?
- ❖ Q: Why do we struggle to own our sin before others, especially those we have sinned against?
- ❖ Q: What is the great lesson for us in seeing how God responded to Jonah and the sailors in this part of the story?

### 4. God, In His Grace, Sent A Better Jonah

- Read Matthew 12:38-41

God's heart has always been focussed on calling rebellious people back to himself. Jonah was seriously disciplined, and only *then* responded to God's call to go and pursue the people that God wanted to save. Even though he was a prophet of God, Jonah, like all men and women, was also rebellious and in need of saving. Knowing this, God sent the perfect man, his son Jesus Christ, to save people from their rebellion against God. He knew that they could not do it on their own. Jesus was sent to accomplish the most difficult mission imaginable, but unlike Jonah, he went willingly. Not only that, but he also paid the price for the sins of all the rebels he was going to save.

- ❖ Q: What does the scene with Jonah (the religious) and the sailors (the unbelievers) show us about the plight of humanity in general?
- ❖ Q: Why is it encouraging for us to see that even Jonah, the prophet, needed saving?
- ❖ Q: How was Jesus the "better Jonah"?

**Personal Reflection Q:** What is the one big take away that God is asking you to apply to your life as a result of this week's message?