

Our Great God

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[0 : 00] If you'll turn with me now in your Bibles to the book of Jonah, if you have Bibles, this is going to be on the screens as well.

If you have the church Bibles, it's Jonah chapter 1. If your Bibles are the same as mine, that's on page 928. We're going to read Jonah chapter 1.

We'll read the whole chapter. This is going to be the text for our sermon this morning as well. Let us hear God's word. The word of the Lord came to Jonah, the 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 Chapa, 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.

[1 : 08] Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm rose 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'll take notice of us so that we will not perish. Then the sailors said to each other, Come, let's cast lots to find out who's responsible for this calamity.

They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, Tell us, who's responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do?

Where do you come from? What's your country? From what people are you? He answered, I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

[2 : 14] This terrified them, and they asked, What have you done? They knew he was running away from the Lord because he'd already told them so. The sea was getting rougher and rougher.

So they asked him, What should we do 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 sacrifices to the Lord and made vows to him.

[3 : 17] Now the Lord provided huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. May God bless his word.

Will you bow your heads with me as we pray? Our Father in heaven, we again give you thanks that we can know you as our Father.

We give you thanks that we can know that you hear us, that you are concerned for us. Once again, we marvel that you have chosen us, and that you have saved us through your Son. And we pray that you would continue to be at work within us by your Holy Spirit.

We ask that each day that you would be focusing our thoughts upon you. We pray, Father, that your name would be honored. We pray that your kingdom would come, and that your church would grow. We rejoice in the Lord Jesus' promise that he would build his church, and that the gates of hell would not stand against it. And so we pray, Father, that we would see evidence of that in our own time.

[4 : 31] We pray for the concert that will soon be taking place. We pray for your blessing upon that, that it would be an encouraging time of fellowship. We thank you for the desire to raise funds for the church plant in Galashiels.

We pray for that church. We thank you for it. We pray that you would be with Craig and his family. We ask that you would bless them. We pray that you would encourage them. We pray for the church there. We ask that you would continue to draw people to it. We pray for your blessing upon Craig's preaching, upon his role as minister. We ask that you would raise up others as leaders in that church. We pray, Father, that you would enable them, not only on Sundays in the preaching of your word, but we pray that as they go out into the community there, that you would enable them to live such lives that would bear good witness to you.

And we pray, Father, that you would be drawing people to yourself, and that you would be building your church, that more and more people would be professing faith in the Lord Jesus and following him. We pray, Father, for our own congregation.

[5 : 36] We pray those things for us as well. We pray that you would be with us as we seek to reach out to the community around us and to those people that we have contact with. We pray, Father, that you would bless us as a congregation.

We pray that you would be with those who are going through times of difficulty. We pray for those who are experiencing difficulties with their health or whose loved ones are unwell.

We commit them to you, and we pray, Father, for your hand to be upon them. In all that we face in this world, we ask, Lord, that you would be with us. We pray for those facing financial difficulty.

We ask that you would provide for them. We pray for those facing difficulties in relationships. Give them wisdom and grace as they seek to respond to those situations.

We pray that you would build us together as a community, that you would give us a genuine love for one another. Father, we think of our own nation. We pray for the government in Holyrood and also in Westminster.

[6 : 44] We commit these men and women to you. Humble them, Father. May they know that there is a God to whom they are accountable. We pray that you would give them wisdom and integrity as they go about the work to which you have called them.

We pray, Father, that you would bless other nations. We think of the terrible situation in Israel and in Gaza at this time. We pray, Father, for those who have experienced the loss of loved ones.

We pray for those who are suffering now. We ask that you would bring an end to the violence and the enmity there. We pray, Father, for a quick resolution to the situation.

As we think of these things, we recognize how beyond us that is. We recognize how almost impossible that seems to us. But we pray, Father, that you would do this.

And we ask for your church in that country. We pray that you would watch over your people, those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus as their Savior. We pray that you would enable them to be a blessing to those around them.

[7 : 49] We pray similarly for the situation in Ukraine, a situation that has gone on for so long that we almost begin to take it for granted. We pray, Father, for those who continue to suffer there.

Again, we pray for an end to that conflict. We thank you, Father, for the measure of peace and prosperity that we know in our own country. We do not take these well off, and we do, and we confess that.

But we recognize that this is a gift from you. And so we pray, Father, that you would enable us to make the most of that opportunity and to make the most of the freedoms that we have here to live faithfully to you.

We pray, Father, that you would continue with us as we turn now to your word. Hear our prayers. Forgive our sins. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to continue our worship now singing, Our God Will Go Before Us.

If you would again stand with me as we sing. Amen. Amen.

[9 : 46] For every step is faithfulness, is the truth that lights our way.

Our God will go before us, the Lord of hosts is with us.

Oh, praise the one who leads us on, for his grace will bring us home.

Though evil forms against us, all heaven will defend us.

The gates of hell shall not prevail, for the battle is the last.

[10 : 51] Our God will go before us, the Lord of hosts is with us.

Oh, praise the one who leads us on, for his grace will bring us home.

Now send us with your presence, and lead us on to heaven.

Where songs of sorrow stray no more, and our every breath is praise.

Our God will go before us, the Lord of hosts is with us.

[11 : 54] Oh, praise the one who leads us on, for his grace will bring us home. Oh, praise the one who leads us on, for his grace will bring us home.

Now our second reading is in the New Testament.

It's in Luke's Gospel. Luke chapter 18, we'll read verses 9 to 17.

Let us hear God's word. To some who are confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people.

Robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

[13 : 29] I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn't even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all those who humble themselves will be exalted.

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. May God bless this word.

If you turn to me again, if you have Bibles with you there, if you turn back to the book of Jonah, I'm going to be focusing on that book this morning.

[14 : 42] If we were to play a word association game, and I was to say to you, Jonah, you would say, whale. whale. We think of Jonah as the book about a whale.

Jonah and the whale. Jonah and the big fish. And in fact, the book of Jonah is a book about a lot of big things. If you look with me in Jonah chapter 1, at verse 2, you notice that it begins by mentioning a great city.

Literally a big city. You notice in verse 4, then the Lord sent a great wind, a big wind. You notice also it mentions a violent storm.

That again is the word big storm. In verse 10, we see how people responded to what Jonah told them.

In verse 10, this terrified them. Literally they feared a big fear. In verse 12, it mentions a great storm, a big storm again.

[15 : 56] In verse 16, we're back to fear. The men greatly feared the Lord. They feared Yahweh with a great fear. In verse 17, now the Lord provided a huge fish, a great fish, a big fish.

It gets translated different ways in English, but in the original, all of that is the same word. And in fact, if we were to carry on, if we were to look in chapter 4, for example, to Jonah, this seemed very wrong and he became very angry.

He had a big anger. And notice in verse 6 of that chapter, then the Lord provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head and to ease his discomfort.

And Jonah was very happy. He had great joy. Over and over and over again, the book of Jonah tells us about big things. It's a very little book about a lot of big things.

A big city, a big wind, a big storm, big fear, big fish, big evil, big joy, lots and lots of big things.

[17 : 09] Now, when an author does that, typically, they want you to notice. The author of the book of Jonah is making a point by telling us about all of these big things.

But his point isn't about a big fish or a big fear or a big storm. The author of the book of Jonah is wanting to impress upon you the fact that there is a big God.

The book of Jonah is about the majesty and the greatness of God. And maybe this is a particularly good time for us to hear about that.

We should probably acknowledge all of the time that our lives are uncertain and that our lives are short. But sometimes we particularly come to appreciate that.

just within the last little bit more than a week, suddenly, there's war in the Middle East. We take it for granted now, I think, often, sadly, but there's even war in Europe.

[18 : 14] That should be shocking to us. And it's very troubling to us. And there are so many other things. In the journal Nature that they've noted, we talk often about the climate crisis and the environmental crisis.

And psychiatrists sometimes talk about the way that that preys on people's mind and the effect that that has upon people's mental health. And particularly younger people who are disproportionately affected by that.

The article in Nature links it to PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, learning disorder, anger amongst young people.

These are terrible things. We live in a very stressful time. And perhaps in the midst of that, it's a very good time for us to be reminded that there is a God who is greater than all of these things.

I want us to look this morning at the book of Jonah and to see what it tells us about the greatness of this God. And we're going to see two things. First of all, the book of Jonah emphasizes maybe most obviously that God is great in power.

[19 : 29] Do you notice something strange about verse 9? They were asking Jonah, who on earth was he that he had caused all of this? And do you notice his response in verse 9?

Jonah says, I'm a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. maybe we'll mention this again as we go on, but if you read through the book of Jonah, everything that Jonah says is technically correct and completely orthodox, even when he's doing the very opposite in terms of his actual actions.

So the statement that Jonah makes here, it's a very true statement. Yahweh is the God of heaven, he is the one who made the sea and the dry land, and what is Jonah doing as he says that?

Well, he's running away from the God who made the sea on the sea. And how well does that go for Jonah? It's not working out very well.

Notice verse 4, the Lord sent a great wind on the sea and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. Do you notice the language that's used there in verse 4?

[20 : 46] The ship wasn't being swamped with water, it wasn't sort of slowly sinking. Apparently, I only saw this recently, over the weekend were there several ships in Granton Harbor that filled with water and sank.

That's not what we're told was happening to this ship, it wasn't just going to founder. The storm was so bad that the ship was going to be smashed to pieces. Imagine being at sea in a ship like that in that kind of storm.

It was a storm of such power, the hardened sailors, they were terrified. But notice the power of God has revealed in the book of Jonah, not just in these great obvious things, notice as well that it's also God exerts his power and his control even in the smallest of details.

miracles. So notice in chapter 4 for example, in verse 6, then the Lord provided a leafy plant. That single plant that grew up came from God.

It was under his control, under his power. The same word that's used there that the Lord provided this in verse 8, when the sun rose, God provided a scorched east wind.

[22 : 08] the wind that came was under God's control. That's also the same word that's used back in verse 17, when it says that the Lord provided a huge fish.

All of these things are manifestations of the power and the control of God. God's control and his power is manifest throughout this book, most obviously in the storm, but even in all of the smallest of details.

they were experiencing the power of God, and we should recognize that we experienced the power of God as well. Creation itself testifies to the power of its creator.

We saw something of that, didn't we, over this weekend even. Thankfully here, I live right beside the river, so I was very grateful. Thankfully here, it wasn't as bad as in some places, but we've experienced the power of that storm, the storm Babbitt that came.

Before moving to Musselboro, my family and I used to live in Skye, and that was sort of like every October. We lived in a very old house there, and it was a very substantial stone house with walls maybe that thick.

[23 : 23] It was the mats that was originally built in the 1800s with the church, massive stone walls. If you looked up into the crawl space, up into the attic, the timbers and the roof were massive, big timbers.

It was a substantial house, and you could sit in that house in October when the storms came, and the whole thing would tremble because of the force of the storms.

We've experienced the power of these things. We should also recognize that God's power is revealed not just in the forces of nature. The Bible also tells us that Jesus' resurrection is the greatest proof of his power.

There's one point in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul speaks about God's incomparably great power, which he then goes on to describe as God's mighty strength which he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus died, and three days later, he was raised from the dead. And when that happened, it was a manifestation of God's incomparably great power.

[24 : 48] God is overwhelming in power. And what effect should that have on us? If we're honest, very often we behave like Jonah.

We'll say a little bit more about his behavior in a moment. But what we ought to do, we see that exemplified in the sailors. Do you notice in verse 16?

At this, and what is this? This is in verse 15, the sea grew calm. You'd think they'd just be relieved, go back to whatever they'd been doing.

at this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered sacrifices to the Lord, and made vows to him. These people were previously pagans.

In verse 5, we tell that they were told that they had been worshipping all of their own gods. Now, they fear Yahweh, and they worship Yahweh.

[25 : 47] when we go out and we see the majesty and the grandeur of the creation around us, when we experience something of the power of the forces of nature, which reveal to us just a tiny bit of God's infinite power, when you experience those things, it should fill you with a sense of awe.

It should give you a desire to worship the God who stands behind all of that. these things should lead us to worship God. Also, I recognize that many of these things, if we talk about the power of God revealed in the storms, we think about the control of God over all things, I recognize that that will also raise questions for us.

The book of Jonah doesn't seek to answer all of these questions. Why does God allow a certain thing to happen? These questions do come to mind. this book is emphasized in the simple fact that God is in control and that he is all-powerful.

And one of the striking things is that the Bible often emphasizes this for your comfort. Think of what Jesus says. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?

Sparrows, tiny, insignificant birds, you can buy them for nothing. Two sparrows sold for a penny, yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside of your Father's care.

[27 : 18] Jesus is saying this in a context in which he's emphasizing that the disciples needn't worry, that they needn't panic, because they know God. And he is a God of unlimited power, whose power extends even to the most minute things.

And notice how Jesus tells us to think of God there. care. Not one of them falls to the ground outside of your Father's care. And you remember how Jesus taught us to pray.

He taught us to say, our Father in heaven. People have commented on those two words, Father and heaven. The fact that God is Father in the sense that he is willing to help you, he is willing to receive you.

There are many things that I am willing to do. There are many things that are outside of my control that I can't do even if I wanted to. But your Father is in heaven. He is not limited by anything.

He is a God of unlimited power. So this gives you confidence. It doesn't answer all of the questions that you may have. It doesn't necessarily enable you to understand why something has happened.

[28 : 36] But in the midst of all of these things, things which prey upon our mental health, things which often affect our physical health, the most difficult things that you might go through, in the midst of all of that, you can know that there is a God behind all of that.

And through Jesus, you can know him as your Father in heaven. This is astonishing. It should lead you not only to worship him, but also to be able to take comfort in him, recognizing that he loves you and that he cares for you.

God. So in the first place, the book of Jonah reveals to you a God who is unlimited in power, who is overwhelming in power. The second thing that the book of Jonah emphasizes, which we might not at first appreciate, is that this is a God of mercy.

The book of Jonah reveals that God is great in mercy. I find Jonah a fascinating book because of the way it was written. And at the very beginning, one of the fascinating things is that at the beginning of the account, there are two, well, we could say ambiguities, two things that we're not certain about.

We might make assumptions about them, but there are two things that aren't actually clear at the beginning of the book. And both of them relate to motivation. The first of them relates to God's motivation.

[29 : 59] Why is God sending Jonah to Nineveh? And then the second one relates to Jonah's motivation. Why does Jonah run away from Nineveh? Some of you may know, but Tarshish is believed to be about where Gibraltar is.

So if Jonah was supposed to go east to Nineveh, and then he goes west to Gibraltar, he's going as far as he possibly can in the opposite direction.

So we might wonder, why is Jonah doing that? With regard to that first question, what's motivating God, there's a degree of ambiguity. If you look at verse 2, go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me.

Now that's a possible way of translating it, and if it's translated that way, what's motivating God to send Jonah to Nineveh? Well, his anger.

God's angry at the Ninevites because of what they've done, isn't he? It's his wrath that's motivating him. Their wickedness has come up before me.

[31 : 09] Go and preach against them. What if I were to tell you that verse 2 could just as equally be translated, go and preach to them, because their calamity has come up before me, because the danger that they are in has come up before me.

The word that's translated here as wickedness, that's the same as the word that's used in verse 7. Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.

It wasn't wickedness that they were talking about. It was the terrible danger that they were afraid of that they're talking about. So verse 2 could be translated in either of those ways.

There's a degree of ambiguity there. What is it that's motivating God? What's the answer? Well, the shocking thing as we get to the end of the book is that the thing that's motivating God is his compassion.

The Lord said, you've been concerned about this plant, though you didn't tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?

[32 : 35] We would be wrong if we assumed at the beginning that God was motivated by his wrath and his anger. I suppose wrath and anger is a thing. It is part of God's response to human sin.

But that's not the thing that's being emphasized here. And that's not the reason that God is sending Jonah to Nineveh. God tells us at the end that the thing that's motivating him to send Jonah to Nineveh is his great concern for the people of that city in spite of their wickedness.

And this is tremendous, isn't it? If you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian, this is the thing that makes all the difference, isn't it? God is great in power.

That wouldn't really be encouraging, would it? Unless we knew that that God was for us. If we were alienated from that God, the fact that he is a God of overwhelming power would be a terrifying thing. But the point of the book of Jonah, one of the points, is that you can know that this God is for you. He's motivated by his concern for you.

[33 : 42] In the New Testament we read, we could pick many examples, in 1 John, in one of John's letters, he said, this is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

And then later on, John goes on to say, this is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

God didn't just send Jonah, God sent his son, God sent Jesus, and he sent him to save you. That's really an astonishing thought.

If you have a sense, all of us have a conscience, we know that we've done things that are wrong. If you recognize that and you have some conception of a great and all-powerful God, that would be

terrifying.

But he has given proof of the fact that he is a merciful and a loving God in that he has sent his son. And Jesus died for the sins of his people. So if you're not a Christian here this morning, you can be. [34 : 54] You can know this God. You can turn to Jesus and trust in him and know that as you do so, you experience the mercy of God, the compassion of God.

Jesus' resurrection is the proof of that. If you're here this morning and you are a Christian, this is also tremendously encouraging.

Because how often are we like Jonah? There's the Jonah of the first half of the book, who is sort of openly, aggressively hostile toward God and doing the opposite of what he knows God wants him to do.

There's the Jonah of the second half of the book, who is maybe we could say passively aggressive. He sort of does what he's supposed to do, doesn't he?

But not really. Do you notice his message to the Ninevites? Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.

[35 : 55] It might not be described as the most winsome gospel message ever. Jonah did the bare minimum. He did what he had to do. But do you notice, lest you think I'm being too hard on Jonah, at the end of this, in spite of the terseness of his message, in verse 10 of chapter 3, when God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction that he had threatened.

The Ninevites, this is tremendous news. At this point, Jonah's delighted, yes? or not. But to Jonah, this seemed very wrong and he became angry.

He prayed to the Lord, isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is why I tried to forestall, this is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish.

God. I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Again, that's true.

And Jonah's angry about it. This is, incidentally, I mentioned, we make two assumptions. We assume at the beginning of the story that Jonah ran away from the Ninevites because he was scared of them.

[37 : 15] We could read, if you wanted, you could read in Nahum, in chapter three, there's a description of what Nineveh was like. It was a terrifying place. I would run away from Nineveh. I would be terrified.

Jonah didn't run away because he was scared. Jonah ran away because he hated them. And he was afraid that if he went, he tells us this, he was afraid that if he went, that God would have mercy upon them.

And his hatred of them was such, justifiably, you might argue, they had done horrible things. But Jonah's hatred of them was such that he did not want them to experience God's mercy.

Maybe we're not quite as extreme as Jonah, but how often are we a little bit like him? We know all of the right words to say, we're correct in all of that, we know what we ought to do, and sometimes we even sort of do it, good, but our hearts not really in it.

And particularly, the challenge here is to demonstrate God's mercy, but I mention this at this point, because this is also encouraging for you.

[38 : 28] If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, the overwhelming greatness of God's mercy is tremendously good news. And if you are a Christian, it is also tremendously good news, because so often we're like Jonah.

So in the first place, this is an encouragement to us, this is the best news. There is also a degree of challenge for us here. Do you notice how the book of Jonah ends?

It ends with a question, doesn't it? Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh? God asked Jonah a question and Jonah doesn't answer.

At least we're not told how Jonah answered. That's not by accident, is it? The author of the book wants us to ask that question. Should God not have compassion for those who are still alienated from him?

And part of the point of the book of Jonah is not merely for us ourselves to know the compassion, the mercy, and the forgiveness of God through Jesus.

[39 : 44] Part of the point of the book of Jonah is for us to demonstrate that attitude toward other people. What did Jonah do? Did Jonah ever repent?

The Ninevites repented? Did Jonah ever repent? We don't know. It's left us an open question because we are to ask that question. We probably don't normally take things to the extreme that Jonah did.

But how often are we maybe just unconcerned about other people? We know that they're not Christians in theory, we know the implications of that, but we really don't worry about it very much. But then this book is challenging us, isn't it? God is concerned about these people, and so should we be. Practically, in terms of what we do about that, one thing very simply that you can do is that you can pray.

Those of you who are Christians here this morning, you will know people who aren't. You can pray that God would give them a desire to know him. You can pray that God would give you an opportunity to speak to them.

[40 : 57] We can seek to live lives in a way that reflects well upon the gospel. Just in simple ways we can seek to address this, even simply by praying for people, praying for ourselves, praying that God would give us that desire and that concern.

So there is a challenge to us here. But as we conclude, I want us to return to the fact that this is profoundly encouraging. And one of the things that I think is most striking in this book is not God's compassion to the Ninevites.

I think one of the most striking things in the book of Jonah is God's patience with Jonah. God didn't have to put up with Jonah. God didn't have to provide the great fish.

God didn't need Jonah to save the Ninevites. He could have sent somebody else. But he persevered with Jonah. God didn't have to put up with Jonah's behavior in chapters 3 and 4. And yet he did. All through the book of Jonah God persevered with Jonah. And we don't know what happened but I think we can believe that God continued to persevere with Jonah after the book because we have the book, don't we?

[42 : 12] Who recorded this for us? Who gave us this? If not Jonah. Presumably then God persevered with him and was at work in him. Isn't that good news for us?

Because so often we're like Jonah. All the time we're like Jonah. Maybe I should speak for myself. All the time I'm like Jonah. Either the open rebellious Jonah at the beginning of the book or the passively aggressive Jonah in the second half of the book.

I'm not really sure if one's better than the other. But all of the time we struggle with these things. And yet God perseveres with us. And that is tremendously encouraging.

That you can know that this God is not only a God who is great in power. We experience that in the forces of nature. The resurrection of Jesus is a great testimony to the power of God.

God is great in power and God is also great in mercy. He's proven that in the cross, in the giving of his son.

[43 : 16] Will you bow your heads with me as we pray? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father in Heaven, we rejoice in your word.

We pray that you would enable us to take these things in and to marvel at the magnitude of your mercy. We pray, Father, for any here this morning who are not yet Christians.

We ask that you would draw them to the Lord Jesus and they would experience your mercy and compassion. We pray for those of us who are following Jesus. We pray that you would give us a fresh sense of your love for us, that we would be overwhelmed by this, that we would delight in it.

We pray that you would make yourself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be the most precious thing to us in all our experience. And we pray, Father, that we would have a desire to make you known to those around us.

We ask that you would watch over us as we go from here. Hear our prayers. Forgive us all our sins. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.