

# Jonah 3

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Jonah 3. Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days journey in breadth.

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God.

They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh. By the decree of the king and his nobles, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

[ 1 : 13 ]     Let them not feed or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

Who knows? God may turn and relent, and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning.

I need the opportunity to catch my breath. It's good to see you this morning. This morning, I want to talk to you about second chances.

No doubt at some point in your life, you have needed one. Or you had to ask for one.

[ 2 : 34 ]     Or you've been the recipient of one. And if you haven't, as my mother would say, just keep living.

And sooner or later, you're going to need one. The interesting thing about second chances is that it can only come from the offended party or the one with the authority to start the clock over.

I can't give you a second chance for somebody else. But this morning, I want to talk to you about someone with all authority to give everyone a second chance.

Second chance when you need it most. A second chance when you're at your worst. Thank God for another chance.

The true story is told about the Rose Bowl game. 1929. Maybe you've heard about it.

[ 3 : 50 ]     It was played between Georgia Tech and the University of California. In the first half of that college football game, for those of you not familiar with the Rose Bowl, a Cal player named Roy Regals recovers a Georgia Tech fumble.

He picks up the ball. He takes off running down the field. Only problem was he was running in the wrong direction.

He ran 65 yards in the wrong direction. Before being tackled by his own teammate.

Right at the goal line. Had he crossed the goal line, Regals would have scored what we call a safety for the opposing team. Cal, at that point, was unable to move the ball any further.

They had to punt. And Georgia Tech blocks the punt. And scores a safety two points anyway. At halftime in the locker room, an embarrassed, dejected, and humiliated Regals sat alone in the corner.

[ 5 : 09 ] The towel over his head crying like a baby. Teammates in the locker room. Teammates in the locker room. And others started calling him wrong way Regals.

It's a nickname that would actually stick with him most of his adult life. Now, the question was, what would the coach do?

Surely, Regals wasn't going to get to go back out and play in the second half. He might as well go ahead and take off his uniform and have a seat out in the stands. Probably with the opposing team's fans.

In fact, Regals' collegiate football career was probably over. As Coach Price pondered what to do with Regals, time got away from him.

And before he knew it, it was time for the teams to head back out onto the field for the second half. All the players got up and started out. Everybody but Roy.

[ 6 : 13 ] He didn't move. Coach looked back and said, come on, Roy. It's time to go. Roy looked up at the coach and said, coach, I just can't do it to save my life.

I've ruined you. I've ruined the University of California. I've ruined myself. There's no way I can go back out there and face that crowd in that stadium.

Coach Price thought for a moment, put his hand on Roy's shoulder and said, Roy, though you ran the wrong way in the first half, I know who you are. The game is only half over.

And the mission hasn't changed at all. We still need to win the game. Roy, get up and get back out there. Thankful for his second chance.

Wrong way. Regals went back out on that field and played the second half like a maniac. And though they still lost the game by. Two points.

[ 7 : 20 ] And through all the national ridicule he endured, Regals came back the next year and was voted team captain. And became an all American.

He graduated, spent time as a coach himself, served in World War II, became a very successful businessman and was not only voted into both schools Hall of Fame.

He was also voted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame as well. Have you ever felt that way? Like you messed up so badly.

Ran the wrong way for so long that there's no way you can recover. All you want to do is give up.

Throw in the towel. Well, like Roy's coach, God knows who we are. And he doesn't give up on us. God says, get back up.

[ 8 : 23 ] Get back out there. The game isn't over yet. Look, we all fumble the ball from time to time. But somehow grace and mercy keeps us in the game.

Thank God for another chance. It's with this backdrop that we look at our text this morning from Jonah chapter 3. The text breaks down into really three very straightforward movements I'd like for you to consider with me very briefly this morning.

First is another chance for Jonah. Secondly, would be another chance for the city of Nineveh. And then thirdly, what that means in terms of another chance for all of us.

As chapter 3 opens, we see wrong way Jonah has just been vomited out of the belly of a great fish onto dry land. I'm going to give you just a moment to process that.

Jonah, a man in the belly of a fish vomited out of fish on dry land, laying there covered in vomit.

[ 9 : 39 ] Let's just take a... Okay. All right. You got it? Good. Now, verse 1 says, There's so much to be excited for just in that opening line.

After all Jonah's rebellious, renegade behavior, all the disrespect and disobedience, God was still speaking to Jonah.

And as long as God was still speaking, there was still a chance to get it right. Like married men in this room can probably relate if your house is anything like mine.

Occasionally, you may have disagreements with your spouse about something. And yes, brothers, it was probably your fault.

And like my house, we may have a spirited discussion about something I've probably done. But that's not really the problem.

[ 10 : 46 ] The problem comes when she stops talking to me. Oh, my God.

That's worse than the argument itself. When she stops talking, I don't know what she's thinking, what's coming next, or how to fix it.

As long as she's talking to me, even if she's mad, there's still hope for me. One might think that after all Jonah had done, God would have had enough of Jonah.

After all, God didn't really need Jonah. God could have spared his life, left him there on that beach, covered in vomit, and just stop talking.

In fact, if we were God, many of us would have said, hey, Jonah, I forgive you, but I don't trust you. And I'm certainly not going to use you anymore.

[ 11 : 53 ] But the patient, perfecting grace of God didn't leave Jonah there, but kept on talking. And God is still talking to all of you today.

No matter what you've done, no matter how long you've done it, there's still hope, as long as God's still talking. And there's a chance for you.

So what did God tell Jonah to do the second time? Verse 2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.

Now, where have we heard this before? Right. Back in chapter 1, verse 2, God said virtually the exact same thing to Jonah.

Just because Jonah went the wrong way, just because Jonah didn't want to obey, the mission never changed.

[ 12 : 57 ] God's mission was going to be fulfilled one way or another, and no man's actions were going to change it. Isaiah 55, verses 10 and 11 says, That's why you shouldn't be concerned when people don't do what you think they're going to do.

or expect them to do. God's plan will be accomplished. Likewise, let me tell you, don't think because you choose not to do something like Jonah that that's going to stop anything.

God's plan will still be accomplished. The question is, if God gives you another chance to do his will, what will you do with it?

Let's look at Jonah's response to another chance. Verse 3. So Jonah rose and went to Nineveh. Jonah's response in chapter 3, verse 3 should have been his response in chapter 1, verse 3.

Follow his progression. In chapter 1, Jonah rose and ran away from God. In chapter 2, Jonah rose and ran smack dab into God. Now in chapter 3, Jonah rose and finally ran with God.

- [ 14 : 52 ] Does this sequence feel familiar to anyone? It certainly does to me. Running from God, even though I grew up in the church, still running from God, only for the challenges of life to cause you to hit rock bottom and run smack dab into God.

Then God somehow graciously has mercy on you and offers you another chance. I pause to tell you this because if you're one who sees this pattern playing out in your own life, know that you're not by yourself.

I would venture to say there are many wrong way runners in this room this morning, me being among them. But God, Ephesians 2, 4, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, wants to give you another chance.

Jonah finally obeyed God with his. What will you do with yours? Then we see another chance for the city of Nineveh.

In verse 3, our text continues to state, Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city. Three days journey in breath, Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey.

- [ 16 : 15 ] And he called out, yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Now if you recall the first message in this series from Pastor Helm, Nineveh was indeed a metropolis.

Probably the Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles of its day. So this was no small task. Jonah heads into the city, declaring this short, simple, dreadful, but divine message.

Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Now Jonah may have actually said more than that, but the emphasis was clear.

Destruction was on the way. Jonah was in essence saying, you all remember Sodom and Gomorrah? It's the same word overthrown used back in Genesis chapter 19, verse 25, to describe that city's destruction.

In 40 days, that's going to be you. There were no sermon illustrations. There were no three-point outlines.

- [ 17 : 32 ] Amy, there were no Kid Connects to help out with the sermon. The message was certainly not at all positive or hopeful. But this simple, dreadful message somehow led to one of the largest revivals in human history.

Why? Not because of the messenger. Not because of the length or style of the message. But because it was God's message. And his divine authority was in it.

God was giving Nineveh another chance. So where do you find, Pastor Joe, another chance in this ominous and dark message?

That's a great question. I'm glad you asked it. Look again closely at Jonah's message. The message of doom was also a message of hope.

Hope. Where you may have heard, Nineveh shall be overthrown. Judgment. The people of Nineveh heard, yet 40 days.

- [ 18 : 45 ] Hope. Because that means we've got 39 days to try to get right with God. God could have immediately just destroyed the city.

But he sent Jonah to warn us and give us 40 days. Though, yes, the message was dark.

To quote my brother, Pastor Jeremy Meeks from last week. There was light in the darkness. He was giving them a second chance.

The story is told of a man sitting one morning eating breakfast and reading the local newspaper before heading out to work. He was doing as my grandmother often did.

He was reading the, yes, young people, it's a paper. It was, it opens and, yeah. He was reading the paper and reading through the obituary section to see if there were any people he recognized.

[ 19 : 48 ] And to his surprise, he read his own name in the obituary section. He didn't know if this was some cruel prank or an inadvertent mistake.

It really didn't matter at that point. After reading the news that he was dead, he was horrified. And he was livid. You would be too.

So he picks up the phone, calls the newspaper, confronts the editor. I'm outraged. You printed my name in the obituary column.

And as you can tell, I'm obviously alive and well. Sir, I'm so sorry, the editor says. It was an error.

There's really nothing I can do but print a retraction tomorrow. Or he was trying to make light of the situation. And I could print your name in the birth column tomorrow and give you a fresh start.

[ 20 : 49 ] Well, that made the man even more upset. And he threatened to sue the paper. He hung up the phone. Seconds later, however, the phone rang.

Still angry, the man picks up the phone. Hello? Hello? The voice on the other line says. Dad, is that you?

It was his son. Who he hadn't spoken to in over 10 years after a fight. I read this morning that you had died, his son said.

The man, now with tears in his eyes, says, no, son. I'm still here. And I'm so glad to hear from you.

What started as a cruel, dark, horrible mistake actually led to a second chance reunion with the man and his son.

[ 21 : 54 ] So now, just like Jonah in verse 3, verses 5 through 9 of our text describe what the city of Nineveh would do with their second chance.

The top of verse 5 tells you right up front. And the people of Nineveh believed God. This was incredible.

As a result of wrong way Jonah finally being faithful, a pagan king tells his pagan city to humble themselves, seek God, and turn from evil.

An entire city, from the king down to the least of them, the scripture says, repents and turns to God. Now, this wasn't just talk for lip service.

You know what I mean, just talk. Have you ever had someone apologize to you, say they were sorry for something, but you could tell they really didn't mean the apology they were giving you?

[ 23 : 00 ] I mean, you know, you got the obligatory, if I've done anything to offend you, I'm sorry. I mean, you would rather them just not apologize at all.

I mean, I used to try to tell my mother this when she would say, apologize to your sister and mean it. Well, I don't, though. How am I?

Well, the Ninevites meant it. There was a citywide fast called even the animals. They covered themselves in sackcloth.

That was in that day a sign of humility, shame, sorrow. And they cried out unto God and they turned from their evil ways.

Here is the beautiful part. As a result of their repentance, now verse 10, what does God do? When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

- [ 24 : 13 ] What does it mean for God to relent? The technical definition of relent is to abandon or mitigate a harsh intention or cruel treatment.
- Now, there are some who say here that God repented or God changed his mind. Let's get a couple of things straight.
- First, God is perfectly holy, infinitely wise, and all-powerful. So God does not ever do anything wrong that he would need to repent for.
- Numbers 23, 19 says, God is not a man that he should lie or a son of man that he should change his mind. Has he said and will he not do it?
- Or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it? God is not like us. Being God means never having to say you're sorry.
- [ 25 : 12 ] God has never had to say, oops, I messed that up. He's God. Secondly, God does not change.
- The word here would be immutable. His essential character never changes. Malachi 3, 6 says, for I, the Lord, do not change.
- Therefore, you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. So what does it mean when it says God relented? I think probably the NIV translation gets it most accurate when it says God had compassion.
- God had mercy. God is holy, just, and righteous. And at the same time, God is merciful, gracious, and compassionate.
- And these attributes never conflict with one another. Jeremiah 18, verses 7 and 8 says, if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.
- [ 26 : 34 ] So what we see here is God's grace, even in judgment. And if you're lost, God's grace is sufficient for you.
- Turn to him, and he will give you another chance. It's interesting to note that verses 1 through 4 records the micro mercy of God extended to Jonah.
- Then verses 5 through 10 record the macro mercy of God extended to the entire city of Nineveh. These two stories are connected by the fact that God used a person who he had given another chance to to reach a whole city that he wanted to give another chance to.
- The fact that God even used Jonah to reach Nineveh should be encouraging to all of us for a couple of reasons. One, the conversion of Nineveh teaches us that there's no limit to what God can do through one person.
- Maybe you look around at your family, your school, your community, the world around you. You feel overwhelmed and discouraged.
- [ 27 : 55 ] You wonder, what can I do to make a difference? Jonah shows us that if you just obey God, there's no limit to what God can do through you.
- Furthermore, the story of Nineveh's conversion teaches us that there's no limit to what God can do through a person, regardless of the mistakes that person has made in their past.
- Could that be you? Certainly been me. You ever done something, made so many mistakes that you wondered, can God still use me?
- Does God still have a plan and a purpose for me? You don't understand what I did. You don't understand the mistakes I've made.
- You don't understand how long I've been running and where I ran to. Can God still use me? God can use Jonah.

[ 28 : 59 ] God can certainly use you. That leads us to this second chance for all of us. We've been talking about it throughout this entire message.

God is ready, willing, and able to give all of us fresh start. We probably have all found ourselves trying to troubleshoot a problem on our computers, our phone, or some other electronic device.

According to multiple studies, one of the biggest time wasters in the workplace are computer-related malfunctions. One study found that the average person spends 20 to 25 minutes a day trying to fix computer-related problems.

The estimate is that for larger countries in the U.S., somewhere in the ballpark of \$4,000 a minute. Now, one easy solution for many of these issues could be as simple as turning off your device.

Over half of computer problems technicians deal with can be fixed with a simple reboot.

[ 30 : 24 ] Follow me here. The reason that computers often fail is that they have system processes continually running behind the scenes. These processes leave behind an electronic footprint that takes up memory.

When you turn off your computer, these programs and processes end, which allow you to restart on a clean slate with a faster and more efficient working device.

This is what God wants to do with each of us. Shut down all those old ways, old habits, old programs, you know, those processes that continue to run in the background, behind the scenes, leaving behind that sinful footprint.

And reboot us with a clean slate so that we can be everything he's called us to be. Now, if all you can see in this story is the story of Jonah, then you've missed the story.

Yes, this is the story of a specific person, Jonah, that the Lord called to a specific place, Nineveh, for a specific purpose to preach his word.

[ 31 : 52 ] But while the details make this unique to Jonah, the underlying principles therein make this a story for everybody.

God was in control of the details of Jonah's life. And God is in control of the details of your life. God determined the place where he wanted Jonah to be.

And God has already determined the place where he wants you to be. God had a purpose to fulfill through Jonah and God has a purpose to fulfill through you.

Jeremiah 29 11 says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord plans for welfare and for not for evil. To give you a future and a hope.

God has great plans for your life. Yes, there have been times in all of our lives where we've played the Jonah.

[ 32 : 54 ] In fact, we are Jonah. But as much as we've failed like Jonah, we also qualify for another chance like Jonah.

God gave Jonah a second chance in spite of Jonah's rebellion. In fact, God gave Jonah a second chance in spite of what he knew was coming in chapter four, which you got to come back next week for.

But God didn't give Jonah another chance because Jonah was so good or so great. And he's not giving you another chance because you're so good or so great, even though you're great.

God does this for us because this is the kind of God he is. God is the God of a second chance.

In fact, God is the God of a third, fourth, tenth, a hundredth chance. This is who God is.

[ 34 : 05 ] No matter what you've done. No matter how big the mistake. No matter how far you've run. And how long you've been running.

There's another chance for you to do his will. There's another chance for you to get it right.

Don't waste your second chance. God is willing. Are you? Thank God for a second chance.