

God Loves You!

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[0 : 00] Anna Jean, you can tell Micah that next week we'll be doing, well, no, in two weeks we'll be doing his, oh, I forgot, I forgot about next week.

That's a shame, because next week we've got free food. Is it two weeks? Two weeks. I have had, I have had the absolute best week ever.

It's been perfect. You can tell Micah next week we'll be having his book. I have no idea what he did. He gets the Bible out of the queue. This is like a year ago. And I found in his room a page from the Old Testament that says Micah on it.

And he just found it in there. And I said that to him, but he just got my name. I don't approve of that.

[1 : 20] But it's funny. All right. So next week we will be in Micah. Just for those that don't know, we preach early in this church, and then later on we have a question and answer time.

So just so that you know, we're in the Minor Prophets. This chart shows the whole history of the nation of both Judah and Israel.

First King Saul, that was 1051. It's all wrapped up down here by 586. And Jonah is right here towards the end of Israel.

All right. We saw all this last week. Those of you that are remembering, don't be thinking that I've lost my place. This is the map. You know, Israel's down here and there's Jerusalem.

Jonah went this way. Nineveh's that way. Anyway, what we're going to do this week is we're going to take a look at the story of Jonah. And we're going to talk about the fact that God loves you.

[2 : 29] I could even, I could add the word even. God even loves you. Or God loves even you.

It doesn't matter how you want to read this. God loves you. And the story of Jonah is going to really pound this truth home.

When you walk out this door today, you should be assured of the fact that if God can love Frank, if God can love Pastor Todd, God can love even you.

But here we go. The account of Jonah. If you found the book of Jonah in your Bible, then you're ahead of me. I'll find it. I left it in here last week. Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah.

There we go. All right. So just to start off, you need to know that even though Jonah was a prophet of the Lord Most High, he was a prophet of God, chosen by God, he was not a good person.

[3 : 47] All right? Check this out. Jonah 1, verse 1 and 2. The word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittiah, saying, Arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against for it, for their evil has come up to me.

God gives Jonah a job. And that job is go preach to people. Verse 3. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

God said, there's people over here that need the word. And Jonah said, bugger them. I'm going the other direction. Now, we'll talk about why later. But he's not a good person. He's not like, I don't want to do it, but I'm going to go a bit.

Not at all. He's gone. So God decided to give Jonah some quiet time. Right? Right? Verse 4. You know, the Lord hurls this great wind.

Terrible things happen. Look at verse 17. The Lord appoints a great fish to swallow Jonah up, and he spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. Quiet time.

[4 : 55] You know what that is, right? That's where, you know, the policeman puts you in isolation so that you can think about things for a couple days, you know, or your mom and dad.

You know, ground you or whatever. You get a little bit of time to think about things. And Jonah did. And so Jonah decides. And if you read chapter 2, it's this beautiful come to Jesus moment where he's like in the belly of the whale, and it's not going well.

And he's like, wait a minute. God. And so he says, sure. All right. Verse 10 of chapter 2. The Lord speaks to the fish. It vomits Jonah out on the land.

And Jonah's off to go do the job. Because Jonah went and spoke to the people of Nineveh, the Assyrians, because he went and presented the word of God to them, they repented.

They turned from their evil ways. And look at chapter 3, verse 4. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

[6:03] Verse 10. When God saw what they did, that is when they repented, when they put on the sackcloth and ashes, when everybody stopped doing the bad things, how they turned from their evil ways, God relented of the disaster he had said he would do to them.

And he didn't do it. I've heard stories of why Jonah was such a good preacher. You know, oh, he was still stinking of the fish belly or whatever.

I don't know why Jonah was such a good preacher, why he was so effective. But the boy goes to Nineveh, and he goes out and he tells them, God's going to kill you all.

And they repent. They believed him and repented. I don't know how well that would go over in Leavenworth. Feel free to try it.

Let me know. Then when God relents from destroying Nineveh, Jonah, the prophet of God who ran away from his job and needed some quiet time in a fishy's belly, he pouts about this.

[7:13] Chapter 4. It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, is this not what I said when I was yet in my country?

This is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that you were a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die.

He wasn't happy that God didn't kill all the people of Nineveh. He threw a little hissy fit. And so, God gives Jonah some more food for thought.

Take a look at verse 4. God asks him, Do you do well to be angry? And then we have the whole hissy fit.

But look at verse 11. Verse 11. Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right from their left, and also much cattle?

[8:28] So this is the story of Jonah. Prophet of God, chosen by God to be a missionary, to go to a foreign land and preach the good news of God, and to challenge the way that people live.

And because he was such a stellar individual, he said, Bugger that and ran away. And God said, No, I don't think so. You're going.

Right? And so Jonah, after thinking about it, goes, Okay, God. He gets there. He speaks the word of the Lord. The people repent. And he goes, I told you to God.

This is why I didn't want to do it. Jonah's not a good person. But God loved him and chose him.

And used him. And there's something you need to know. God loves his people.

[9:31] Even Jonah. All right? God loves his people. Even his chosen prophet, who wanted to go anywhere but where he was sent, God loves that person.

And don't think that Jonah is an anomaly. Don't think that Jonah stands out. All right? Jonah just didn't want to go preach the gospel. How about a fornicating murderer?

Right? Who's David? How do we know David? King of Israel. What's said about him? A man after God's own heart.

God so chose David that he said, From you will come the Messiah. Even though he's guilty of both adultery and murder. How about Peter?

Peter? Right? Peter was a man with issues. Right? Could you imagine the Son of God coming up to you and you guys are having a conversation? And he says, Get thee behind me, Satan?

[10:38] And yet, he turned to him and said, Upon your faith I will build my church. I want to turn to the book of 1 Kings.

This has been a story that's been on my heart all week. I just, I love this story. 1 Kings chapter 19. You got to understand, This is the prophet Elijah. Okay? There's Elijah.

Elijah is going to be followed by Elisha. So this is the first one. Right? And he is, There's this battle going on of good and evil. And in chapter 18, He has killed all the false prophets that worship Baal.

Right? He's led this great, tremendous victory. And verse 19 of 1 Kings. Verse 1. Ahab told Jezebel that Ahab was the king of Israel, the northern tribes.

[11 : 52] And Jezebel was his wonderful wife. She was so gracious. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he'd killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, So may the gods do to me and more also if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.

Mind you, Elijah has just been used by the Lord to wipe out all the prophets of Baal. Elijah stood on the mountain and prayed and God sent fire down from heaven to consume not only his sacrifice, not only the stone the sacrifice was on, but the water and air.

It's just bizarre in front of everybody. Here's this man who's riding high in God's favor. And Jezebel threatens him and he laughs.

He goes, ha ha ha, I'm the servant of the Most High. Bring it! That's what he should have done. But look what he does.

Verse 3. Then he was afraid. Could you imagine being God? Your prophet has just been called by you over here.

[13 : 16] You stood him up on Mount Carmel. You surrounded him with enemies and you delivered him by your might. Because you are God. And then this foreign woman goes, boo!

And he's afraid. How would you feel being God? Come on! Elijah, what do I got to do? Check this out.

He was afraid and he arose and ran for his life. And came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah. And he left his servant there. He takes off and he's gone.

And his servants follow him like, what's up? He gets to Beersheba and he tells his servant, you hang out here. And disappears. He says, and he left his servant.

He himself went another day's journey into the wilderness and came down and sat under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, it is enough now, O Lord. Take away my life, for I am no better than my father's.

[14 : 25] I wonder if he was taken off running. And he's like, what am I doing? Why am I running? And I wonder if he continued to run because he was filled with shame.

Because he was afraid. Instead of relying on God. And he comes down and he says, I'm no better than my father's. And I love this.

He laid down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said, arise and eat. Who sent the angel?

Is there an angel Uber 1-800-I'm-tired-and-hungry-send-me-an-angel? No. Not yet. We're still working on that app.

But the prophet of God runs away and God, in absolute, utter disgust, sends an angel of mercy to him.

[15 : 28] Here you go. Eat and drink. And Elijah goes, he eats and he drinks and he goes back to sleep. And again, he looked and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

He ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him and said, arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you. God had used Elijah to do this marvelous thing.

And rather than walk in faith, he ran in fear. And God sent his angel to him.

Because God loves his people. They don't have to be perfect. God didn't send his angel to him when he was walking high on the mountain and everybody's, yeah, look at me.

I'm far from God. Yeah, I did that. I prayed. No, no, no, no. God didn't send his angel at the moment that he was feeling. He sent him when he was in need.

[16 : 37] He loved him where he was. You see, there's some passages I just, I want you to cling on to.

The 23rd Psalm, the Lord is my shepherd. He makes me lie down. Great passage. It's great encouragement. Philippians chapter 1 verse 6.

Being confident of this. That he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. Because he loves you. There's some days as a Christian we feel like, I am losing it.

And God says, calm down. Calm down. It's okay. We'll get this done. Not you're going to get it done. God's going to get it done. Oh, 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

I hate this verse. Because it takes away all excuse. There is no temptation taken you, but such is a common demand. God who is faithful will provide a way out.

[17:42] Because he loves you. Romans 8, 28. What's that one? Anybody know Romans 8, 28? I think you've got a terrible translation.

It can't mean all things work together for good. Who loved God and called according to purpose. Yeah. And how about Hebrews 13, 5? I just picked Hebrews 13, 5.

I could have picked any number of them. Because this is one of those truths that you find throughout Scripture. You'll find it early in the Old Testament. You'll find it all the way through. And you find it even here in Hebrews 13, 5. Which says, Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have. For he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Okay. I didn't.

[18:50] Okay. See Hannah Jean for the five-fingered prayer. She's a good teacher. Here's the thing, my friends. If you're God's people, He knows you're going to have a bad day.

He knows you're going to have a bad week. He knows that you are going to screw up so royally that they will post it all over Facebook and it will become an instant meme around the globe.

Thankfully, that wasn't me this week, but I'm certain that it's happened to people. You might be Jonah.

You might be David. You might be Peter. Maybe your life is like Elijah. God promises He will never leave us nor forsake us.

His love is true no matter where we are. Isn't that a great comfort? But God's love goes beyond just His people.

[19:58] Yeah, we haven't heard that a lot this winter, have we? Snow falling off the roof. God doesn't just love His people.

God loves all people. And this is one of those things that... I want to explain to you why Jonah wanted to go the other way.

You ready? You see, the Assyrians, the people of Nineveh, they were terrible people. They established their dominion through terror, through fear.

These guys were great propagandists. Long before propaganda became well known, they would... We'll get to that.

They were experts in siege warfare. I'll show you something about that, too. They were innovators of the light cavalry. This was so long and early into the study of warfare that they really didn't have...

[21:09] I mean, we know what light cav is now. But the idea of putting horses on... Most people, the best they could do was chariots. The Assyrians took it to the next level. They went beyond just chariots to having just one person per horse.

And these people could go all around the battlefield and cause all sorts of mayhem. These guys were great innovators in warfare. Could I get the lights...

Just reach back to the two banks on... Not that one, the other over. Turn off all those on that side. Just turn them all off. Keep going.

Keep going. Perfect. This is a wall relief. And what you'll see here... What do you see there? What do you call those?

Wheels. They built mobile siege towers that would have rams on them to break down the wall and archers on the top to shoot over the wall.

[22:11] Great innovators. This wasn't an innovation, but this was a terror tactic. They would impale people and just leave them on posts.

They'd pull posts out of the wall and impale the occupants and just leave them there. Early advertisement. Hey, we're Assyria. We'll kill you if you don't go our way.

That didn't always work. So sometimes they would pull the flesh off of people, literally tan their hides and write messages on it and use the flayed skin of their enemies to write their propaganda.

Look, we're the Assyrians. We were here. You're next. Or you can come to our team. Really nice people. Here's some reliefs. Oh, this is a great one.

Yeah. Here we're just torturing the king and his leaders. And over here we're marching around with the heads of those.

[23:12] They'd cut off people's head and they'd take them around going, woo, we're great. The Assyrians were terrible people. The reason why Jonah ran away was because the Assyrians were conquering the world and he didn't want to help them out.

He wanted them to die because they were terrible people. But God spared even the Assyrians and he's willing to spare anyone who turns to him.

If you've got a Bible, you can look in the Gospel of John 1.

Gospel of John 1, verses 12 and 13. To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

So here comes Jonah into the city. God's going to kill you all in 40 days if you don't repent. And the people, what do they do? They repent.

[24 : 37] And though they are vicious murderers who are just inventors of torture and terror, because they repent, God forgives them.

How about Psalms? 145.18. This is a great one. 145.

145. The Lord is near, right?

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. There are some people who think salvation is like, it's like a lifesaver, like a life jacket, you know.

Yeah, I got my salvation in the glove box. If I ever need it, I'll pull it out. No, no, no, no, no, no. Don't be deceived. God isn't waiting around to do your, you know, let you do whatever you want and then come on in the end to rescue you.

[25 : 47] When you hear the truth, if you respond to God, no matter how bad you were before, no matter what sins you're guilty of, no matter where your starting point was, when you turn to him in truth, he will rescue you.

He doesn't play games. It's not like you can just, you know, it's not like you're playing cards and you've got the get out of jail free card and oh, I've got the get out of hell free card.

No, no, no. God doesn't play games. But if you turn to him in truth, if you realize that he is God of the universe and you humble yourself before him, he will forgive you.

Romans 10, verse 12. Another great passage. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

Look, it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you come from. You could be an Assyrian that is full of evil and treachery. You could be a Judean full of the word of God. It doesn't matter. When we turn to God, he bestows his riches upon you.

[27 : 06] God loves all people. That's the story of Jonah. God loved Jonah even though Jonah was a bum.

Even though Jonah didn't do what he was supposed to do. And God loved the Assyrians even though they were terrorists. Even though they were people who terrorized the entire world and ended up conquering the world.

When they turned to the Lord, God responded. Some of you think the sermon's done, but I've got one more point that I want to make.

You see, the story of Jonah truly emphasizes the love of the Lord.

Notice the very last thing that God says to Jonah. You can turn on the lights again. Those ones that I had you turn off. My wife is yelling at me.

[28 : 09] Rescue me from her. Thank you. Where is Jonah? Jonah, Obadiah. No. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah.

There it is. Jonah chapter 4 verse 11 says this. God is confronting Jonah. He says, Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also much cattle?

God owns and cares, not just for the people, but even for animals. They're just dumb animals.

Psalms 50 says that He owns all of them. Psalms 147 says that He feeds them, brings them their food in season. Luke chapter 12 verse 6, Are not five sparrows sold for, and He does not forget one of them?

If God cares so much about dumb animals, how much more does He care for you? How much more?

[29 : 29] I got to be honest with you. Sometimes we all make mistakes. Can I get an amen? Sometimes, sometimes, sometimes we're like Elijah, and God uses us, and it's like, Oh, this is awesome.

Look what God is doing. quite honestly, more often, it's like, at least in my life, run away!

It's not going well! And far too often, I'm Jonah. Like, God, I know you've got a plan. I don't want nothing to do with it.

I'm out of here. God is faithful and true. I'm certain that when you walked in here today, you were, you were in one of those places.

You're either like, God is doing great things. I am so glad to be in church today. Maybe you're like, dude, I just, I just need to get through the next day.

[30 : 36] I am, ugh. Perhaps you're like, I don't want to be here. And I was, I was, blew a tire, ended up in the parking lot, came in the door, you know.

Who knows why you're here. But I will tell you this. When you turn to the Lord, He will never forget you. He will never abandon you. He will love you, and walk with you through all.

You can rest in the Lord. 1 Peter 5, verse 7, cast all your cares upon Him because He cares for you.

That's the message. Last week, we talked about what happens when believers screw up. And this is the follow-up to that message. God truly does love you. Good, bad, God loves you.

He will never take His love away from you. He will walk through each day. You can rest in the Lord. I want to wrap this up with a word of prayer.

[31 : 56] If you haven't trusted Jesus, I just want to let you know that Ninevites have nothing upon the wrath of God. Just throw that into the hopper.

God's anger at sin is something that you and I cannot fully comprehend. But just as He loves beyond we can understand, His wrath for sin is beyond knowledge.

But the good news is you can turn to Him today, just like Nineveh did. And Christian, believer, I don't know where you're at in your journey.

I don't know if you're living for the Lord with all your strength. I don't know if you're running from God and His calling with all your endurance. Turn to the Lord.

Rest in His love. It's the only place of great comfort. Let Him minister you. wherever you are. Father, I thank You for Your Word.