

Praying From The Belly Of The Fish

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Date: 17 June 2012

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[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

We are a community following Jesus with a heart for the city and beyond. That is how we speak of ourselves as a church whose gathering place, whose sanctuary is located in the downtown core of one of the greatest cities in the world.

We are a community following Jesus with a heart for the city and beyond. Following Jesus. Not just reading about Jesus.

Not just thinking about Jesus. Not just singing about or to Jesus. But following Jesus. As we sang earlier in the service and as we sang last week, where you go, I'll go.

Where you stay, I'll stay. When you move, I'll move. I will follow you. Whom you love, I'll love.

[1 : 13] How you serve, I'll serve. If this life I lose, I will follow you. We are a community following Jesus.

Getting in line behind Jesus. Staying close to Jesus right on his heels with a heart for the city and beyond. With a heart for the city.

I suggested last Sunday that we need to make a small adjustment in our identity and mission statement. A small adjustment with huge implications.

I suggest we need to replace the article A with the pronoun his. That we change it from a heart for the city to his heart for the city.

To Jesus heart for the city. To the incarnate God's heart for the city. To the God man's heart for the city. We are a community following Jesus. The living God in our flesh and blood.

[2 : 14] With a heart. With his heart for the city. Now nowhere else in scripture for me. Is his heart for the city more clearly revealed.

Than in the Old Testament book of Jonah. The story of Jonah. A fishy tale. That can be dismissed as a metaphorical tale.

It is a story about God. As all the stories and all the books of the Bible are finally about God. More specifically.

The story of Jonah is a story about God's heart. And even more specifically. The story of Jonah is the story about God's feelings.

God's feelings for cities. And especially for the 7th century before Christ city of Nineveh. A city which God himself calls the great city.

[3 : 11] Twice in the narrative. God says this is a great city. In God's initial call in Jonah 1.1. Arise go to Nineveh the great city.

And then in God's reiteration of that call in Jonah 3.1. Arise go to Nineveh the great city. Great in what sense? Architecturally. Technologically.

Intellectually. Culturally. Yes. But great in the sense of great to God. Great in the sense of much on God's radar screen.

Genesis. I mean. Jonah 3.3. Jonah 3.3. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city. Or a very important city. But literally.

But literally. It reads. A great city to God. An important city to God. I don't understand. Why there are no translations. They get that. The text says. It's a great city to God.

[4 : 09] Filled with human beings. 120,000. According to God's count. Created in the image of the creator. And then creating this magnificent city. The story of Jonah.

Is the story about what the living God. Feels for that city. You see. Not all was well in Nineveh. As is the case with every city.

No matter how great. We know that in Jonah's time. Nineveh experienced significant social unrest. Demonstrations on the streets. Famine was spreading. Flood rose. Contaminating the city's water supply. There was growing immorality. Corruption. Injustice. And violence. An earthquake had come. Shaken their sense of the world. And the monarchy itself. Was shaking. Jonah 1.1. Arise. Go to Nineveh. The great city. And cry against it.

[5 : 10] Because its wickedness. Has come up to me. As I pointed out last Sunday. Wickedness. Is only one way. To translate. The Hebrew word. That God uses. A number of scholars.

Now realize. That the primary meaning. Of this word. Is trouble. Arise. Go to Nineveh. And preach against it. Because its trouble. Has come to me.

God cares for this great city. Because it is in trouble. For all of its magnificence. It's in trouble. And God feels for the city. Because the city. Is experiencing trouble.

Jonah 4.11. 120,000 people. Who do not know the difference. Between the right and left. It's a way of saying. 120,000 people. Who do not know right from wrong.

Not hard to imagine. Is it? And as a consequence. In trouble. In difficult. In misery. Having left the living God. Out of the equation.

[6 : 07] And having concluded. That God's ways. Are now old fashioned. The city is in trouble. And that troubles God. God does not want to see. Cities in trouble. God feels for cities.

In trouble. And the book of Jonah. Is all about God's feelings. It's all about God's desire. To bring his people. Into his heart.

It's all about. Getting God's people. To feel for the city. What he himself. Feels for the city. Which is what. Jonah the disciple. Jonah the prophet.

Does not want to do. Jonah. Does not want to feel. What his God. Feels. For the city. Jonah. The Jewish prophet. Does not want to feel.

What God feels. For Nineveh. The Gentile city. More than. A mere Gentile city. Nineveh. Is the leading city. Of the Assyrian empire. Which wants to.

[7 : 03] Inflict. And has inflicted. Great horror. On Jonah's people. The northern tribes. Of Israel. The God of the Jews. Feels the trouble.

And misery. Of the enemy. Gentile. City. And Jonah. Does not. Want to feel. What God feels. So Jonah runs.

In the opposite direction. He is in Jerusalem. Presumably. That's where he received. This word. Nineveh. Is east of Jerusalem. He heads west. He heads in exactly.

The opposite direction. From God's call. Know anyone like that? And as we saw. Last Sunday. In chapter one. Of Jonah. It does not work.

It cannot work. No human being. Can do. What Jonah. Tries to do. Flee. The presence. Of Yahweh. It is impossible. Jonah.

[7 : 59] Knows. Psalm 139. Where can I go. From your spirit? Where can I flee. From your presence? Literally. It is. Where can I flee. From your face? If I send to heaven.

You are there. If I make my bed. In shale. Look. You are there. If I take the wings. Of the dawn. That is. As I travel. At the speed of light. If I go to the remotest part.

Of the sea. Even there. Your right hand. Will lead me. Even there. Your right hand. Will take hold of me. Which is what we see God doing.

In the second chapter. Of Jonah. The sailors. On the ship. Heading in the opposite direction. From Nineveh. Have in their mind. Have in their minds.

No choice. But to throw this prophet. Overboard. Into the sea. They do not want to do it. Bless their hearts. They don't want to do it. But they concluded. That Jonah has angered his God.

[8 : 54] And that the storm at sea. That is troubling them. Was due to Jonah. His disobedience. To Jonah's sin. Jonah does not argue. With their assessment. Jonah 112. For I know.

That on account of me. The great storm. Has come on you. And reluctantly. The sailors. Throw him overboard. Into the sea. Down he goes.

Continuing. The movement. Of his life. That started. When he sought. To run from God. Down. Down. Down. Down. To Joppa. To get a ride.

To Nineveh. Down. Down. Down. Into the hold. Of the ship. To enter. Into unconsciousness. So he doesn't have to think about God. Down. Into denial. So he doesn't have to face reality. That he knows.

And down. Into the sea. Way down. All the way down. But. Even there. Your right hand. Will lay a hold of me. In his great mercy.

[9 : 50] God rescues. The disobedient. Downward. Descending. Prophet. God sends. Or appoints. Or provides. A great fish. Great city.

Great fish. To come and swallow Jonah. And thereby. Save him from certain death. It is then. That Jonah prays. On his way down.

In the belly of the fish. Jonah. Finally. Pray. Pray. Jonah. 2. 2. I called. Out of my distress. To the Lord. To Yahweh. While on board.

The ship. The Gentile sailors. Called. On their gods. The Jewish prophet. Did not. Jonah. Did not. The captain. Of the ship. Had ordered. Everyone.

To call. On their gods. Jonah. Didn't. Do it. That's because. Jonah. Is unhappy. With his God. Because of God's feelings. For the city. That Jonah. Wants to see. Destroyed. When all the other passengers.

[10 : 48] Are in the storm. Tossed ship. Were calling out. To their gods. Whom. Jonah. Knew. To be. Idols. The mere projection. Of human. Wish dreams. Jonah.

Did not. Call on his God. Whom he confesses. To be. The God. Of heaven. The maker. Of the sea. And the dry land. But when he began. To experience. Fully.

The inherent. Consequences. Of his sin. When he began. To go down. Down. Down. Jonah. Finally. Praise. No. Anyone like that.

And God. Here's Jonah's prayer. And God. Acts. On Jonah's behalf. And by extension. Acts. On behalf. Of the city. Whose troubles.

Have also. Come up to God. Jonah. Praise. From the belly. Of a great fish. Let's just take a few moments. And. Indwell. This prayer.

[11 : 44] And to explore it. More fully. And let's do it. In two phases. The first is. Let's look at the God. To whom Jonah prays. And then second.

Let's look at the prayer. Jonah. Praise. To this God. The God. To whom. Jonah. Praise. Is a God. Who feels.

Especially. For those. In trouble. And the God. Who is. Able. To do something. For people. In trouble. The God.

Who feels. As I said. Last Sunday. I'm using this word. Intentionally. I know. What I'm doing. In using the word. Feel. I know. What I'm saying. When I say. God. Feels.

I know. It's an emotion word. It's a deeply. Emotional. Word. We meet. This fact. About the living God. In the early chapters. Of the grand story.

[12 : 41] That is being told. In the Bible. Israel. Is in Egypt. Suffering. Under the injustice. And cruelty. Of the great Pharaoh. God. Meets. Moses. Who had become. The great leader.

Of Israel. Out in the desert. In a bush. That is burning. And God. And Moses. Here's words. Which would forever. Change. His perception.

Of life. It's Exodus. Chapter 3. Verses 7 to 8. Critical text. For the understanding. Of the Old Testament. But especially. The whole Bible.

Exodus 3. Verses 7 to 8. God says. To Moses. I'm the God. Of your fathers. The God. Of Abraham. The God. Of Isaac. The God. Of Jacob. And I. Have surely.

Seen. The misery. Of my people. In Egypt. And I've. Heard. Them. Crying. Out. Because of their. Taskmasters. And I know. Their suffering. And I have.

[13 : 34] Come down. To rescue them. From the troubles. The living God. Is the God. Who sees. Who sees. Our misery. Who sees.

Our trouble. The living God. Is the God. Who hears. Who hears. When people. Cry out. In their troubles. The living God.

Is the God. Who knows. I know. Their suffering. Now. The Hebrew word. That is used. Here. Is the word. Yada. And to know. In a Yada way.

Means. To know. More than. Cognitively. It's the word. That's used. To describe. The intimate. Knowing. Of a husband. And wife. In sexual. Union. Yada.

Involves. This intimate. Knowing. That is. Cognitive. But also. Visceral. It is mental. But is also. Emotional. I know. They're suffering. I feel.

[14 : 28] They're. Suffering. Now. I submit to you. That this is what separates. The Judeo-Christian God. From all the other gods. Of all the other religions.

Most religions. Will affirm. Four attributes. Of God. God is infinite. God is. Incomprehensible. God is indivisible. And God is.

Impassable. Or as the Greeks. Put it. Apathetic. Non-feeling. You see. For the Greeks. If God. Is to. Remain God.

God. Cannot. Be. Affected. By. Anything. Outside. Of God. God. Cannot. Be. Moved. By. Anything. Outside. Himself. For. In the Greek. Mind. That.

Would. Imply. That. God. Might. Be. Able. To. Be. Controlled. By. Something. Outside. Himself.

Therefore. God. Must. Not. Feel. God. Cannot. Experience. Emotions.

[15:24] Whether. Pleasant. Or. Painful. Which. Means. God. Does. Not. Suffer. The. Divine. One. Is. Impassable. Apathetic. Non-passionate. On.

Feeling. And. This. Is. The. View. Held. By. Most. Religions. In. The. World. Today. So. For. Example. When. Our. Muslim. Friends. Suffer. They. Can. Now.

This. View. Has. Also. Permeated. Its. Way. Into. The. Christian. Church. From. The. Second. Century. To. The. Ninth. Century. The. Impassability. Of. God. The. Apathy. Of. God. Was.

A. Tenet. Of. Orthodoxy. The. Living. God. Cannot. Be. Moved. By. The. Realities. Of. Life. By. The. Troubles. Of. Human. Be. And. Still. Be. Divine.

Oh. The. Church. Fathers. Spoke. Of. The. Love. Of. God. For. Broken. Human. Beings. But. That. Love. Was. An. Attribute. Not. A. Feeling. To. Say. That. God. Has. The. Capacity.

[16:22] To. Feel. For. Or. Feel. With. Others. Implies. That. God. Might. Be. Be. Controlled. By. Reality. Outside. Of. God. Self. It.

Was. The. German. Theologian. Your. God. Mulder. Who. Lived. Through. The. Horror. Of. The. Nazi. Holocaust. Who. Is. Helping. The. Church. Regain. A. Biblical. View. Of. God. Mulder. Mulder. Argues. That. The. Church's. Fathers. From. The. Second. Century. To. The. Ninth. Century. The. Church's. Theologians. Made. The. Mistake. Of. Recognizing. Only. Two. Alternatives. Either. God's.

Essential. Incapacity. For. Suffering. Or. God's. Being. Subject. To. Suffering. If. God. Did. Suffer. And. Mulder. Argues. There's. A. Third. Option.

Namely. The. Voluntary. Laying. One. Self. Open. To. Another. Allowing. One. Self. To. Be. Intimately. Affected.

[17:16] By. The. Other. At. The. Burning. Bush. Israel. Discovers. What. Israel. Could. Never. Deduce. The. Living. God. Chooses. To. Be. Intimately. Affected.

By. Others. The. Living. God. Opens. God. Self. Up. To. The. Pain. Of. The. World. God. Is. Infinite. God. Is. Incomprehensible.

God. Is. Indivisible. But. God. Is. Not. Impassable. God. Is. Not. Apathetic. I. Have. Seen. I. I.

Have. Come. Down. To. Deliver. My. People. I. Have. Seen. I. Have. Heard. And. I. Feel. And. I. Come. Down. All. The. Way. Down. In. And. As. Jesus.

Of. Nazareth. And. Jesus. Clearly. Feels. The. Pain. Nobody. Knows. The. Trouble. I. Seen. Nobody. Knows. But. Jesus. That.

[18:15] Is. The. God. To. Whom. Jonah. Praise. From. The. Belly. Of. The. Fish. As. Jonah. Goes. Down. Down. Down. He. Praise. To. A. God. Who. Is. Going. To. Go. Down. Down. Down. With. Him. And.

Abel. The. God. To. Whom. Jonah. Praise. Is. Abel. Able. To. Actually. Do. Something. In. The. Face. Of. Trouble. And. This. Is.

What. Is. Not. Except. Perhaps.

In. Chapter. Three. When. A. Whole. City. Repents. A. Great. Fish. Swallowing. A. Man. Enabling. This. Man. To. Stay. Alive. For. Three. Days. And. Three. Nights. Really.

Martin. Luther. Martin. Luther. The. Great. Reformer. This. Narrative. Seems. Almost. Unbelievable. Yay. Sounds. Like. A. Greater. Falsehood. And. Folly. Than. Any. Fable. Of. The. Poets.

[19:10] If. It. Were. Not. Recorded. In. Scripture. I. Would. Regard. It. As. A. Ridiculous. Lie. So. What. Are. We. To. Do. In. Our. Time. With. This. Part.

Of. The. Story. Some. Have. Done. Some. Research. Into. Other. Non. Biblical. Big. Fish. Stories. And. People. Have. Discovered. That. Some. People. Have. Been. Swallowed.

By. Whales. And. Lived. Through. The. Experience. Albeit. A. Bit. Shaken. Now. Such. Storms.

Help. Us. Realize. That. As. Amazing. As. The. Jonah. Story. Is. Such. Stories. I'm. Sorry. Help. Us. Realize. That. As. Amazing. As. The. Jonah. Story. Is. It. Is. At.

Least. Not. Totally. Absurd. But. I. Think. That. Misses. The. Mark. That. Tact. Goes. In. The. Wrong. Direction. I. Know. That. The. Idea. Of. God.

[20 : 02] Sending. A. Great. Fish. To. Rescue. Jonah. Is. On. Some. Scientific. Presuppositions. Unbelievable. And. Incredible. But. Then.

So. Is. Most. Of. The. Grand. Story. I. Mean. Where. Does. The. Story. Begin. Before. The. Burning. Bush.

Begin. It. Begins. With. God. And. Nothing. God. And. Nothing. And. What. Happens. Out. Of. A. Nothing. God. Creates. Something. Something. Yeah. Like. This. Great. Creation. We. Enjoy. God. Nothing.

Out. Of. Nothing. God. Brings. Into. Being. Seas. And. Dry. Land. The. Sun. And. Moon. And. Stars. Billions. Of. Them. Animals. And. Birds. And. And.

[20 : 59] Human. Beings. You. And. Me. And. Every. Person. In. This. City. Out. Of. Of. Nothing. And. Then. The. Story. Continues. On. The. Same. Note. I.

Mean. Things. Happen. In. The. Rest. Of. The. Story. That. Are. Not. Supposed. To. Happen. Things. The.

Desert. For. Forty. Years. Forty. Years. Every. Morning. There's. Manna. On. The. Ground. And. Quail. Every. Night. And. On. The. Story. Goes. Until. We. Get. To. The. Part. Of. The. Story. Where. God. Literally. Comes. Down. In. And. As. Jesus. Of. Nazareth. Conceived. In. A. Virgin's. Womb. Touches. Blind. Eyes. And.

Makes. Them. See. Turns. Water. Into. Wine. Frees. People. From. Demonic. Power. Takes. Five. Loaves. Of. Fish. Bread. And. Two. Fish. And. Feeds. Five. Thousand. People. He. Raises. The. Dead.

[21 : 56] And. On. The. Story. Goes. Until. We. Come. To. The. Heart. Of. The. Grand. Story. When. Jesus. Of. Nazareth. Is. Crucified. On. A. Cross. He's. Buried. He's. Dead. But.

On. Easter. Morning. The. Tomb. Is. Empty. And. He's. Alive. Take. The. So-called. Supernatural. Elements. Out. Of. The. Grand. Story. And. It's. No. Longer. A. Grand. Story.

In. Fact. Take. The. Supernatural. Elements. Out. Of. This. Story. And. The. Story. Collapses. It's. Not. Even. A. Good. Morality. Tale. Anymore. Because. It's. Chief. Character. Dies. Defeated. The. God. To. Whom. Jonah. Praise. Is. Able. He's. Able. To. Do. What. People.

Say. Can't. Be. Done. He's. Able. To. Do. What. No. One. Expects. To. Be. Done. Now. Jesus. Later. On. Will. Point. To. The.

[22 : 49] Jonah. Story. And. Especially. To. Himself. And. It. Seems. As. Though. Jesus. Treats. The. Fish. In. The. Same. Light. That. He. Treats. His. Resurrection. God. Has. Now. Done. Something. That. No. One. Can. Do. The.

God. Who. Feels. For. People. In. Trouble. Is. Able. To. Do. Something. For. People. In. Trouble. That's. The. Point. Of. This. Story. And. That. Is. The. God. To. Whom. Jonah. Pray. By. This. Time. I. Should. Have. Had. Like. Fifty. Amens. Or. Another. Fifty. That's. Cool. Anyway. We're. Baptist. And.

What. Does. Jonah. Pray. What. Does. Jonah. Pray. Jonah. Praise. A. Beautiful. Poetic. Him.

[23 : 49] Like. Prayer. On. His. Way. Down. In. The. Belly. Of. A. Fish. You. Might. Know. That. Jonah's. Prayer. Is. Also. Problematic.

To. Many. People. They. Find. It. Difficult. Improbable. That. A. Man. Who. Is. About. To. Drown. Can. Pray. This. Way. And. Some. Have. Even. Suggested. That. You. Can. Scissor. Out. This. Prayer. In. Jonah. Two. And. The. Story. Can. Still. Hold. One. Three. Four. Now. I. Hear. The. Concerns. But. Praying.

The. Way. Jonah. Prays. Is. Not. That. Hard. To. Conceive. At. All. For. The. Simple. Reason. That. Jonah. Was. Steeped. In. The. Prayer. Book. Of. Israel.

In. The. Psalms. Jonah. Grew. Up. And.

[24 : 41] More. To. The. Point. As. A. Prophet. Of. Israel. He. Would. Also. Be. Steeped. In. The. Psalms. The. Prophets. Had. To. Know. The. Psalms. And. I. Recently. Discovered. What. I. Hadn't. Learned. Before. That. The. Psalm.

The. Prophets. Were. Expected. To. To. Be. To. Compose. Psalms. They. Were. To. Compose. Hymns. And. That's. Why. The. Works. Of. Isaiah. And. Jeremiah. And. Amos. And. Micah. Are. So. Full. Of. Psalm. Like. Prayers. And. Songs. In. A. Crisis. In. Trouble.

We. Pray. What. Our. Minds. And. Hearts. Were. Trained. To. Pray. Right. When. The. Chips. Are. Down. We. Pray. What. Our. Minds. And. Hearts. Were. Trained. To. Pray. Down. In. The. Depths. Way. Down. In. The. Depths. In. The. Sea. In. The. Swirling. Chaos. Or. In. A. Hospital. Room. We. Will. Pray. What. We. Been. Trained. To.
[25 : 33] Pray. Even. If. It's. Only. Now. I. Lay. Me. Down. To. Sleep. I. Pray. The. Lord. My. Soul. Keep. If. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Jonah prays the way he does in this poetic and hymn-like way because he was trained by the Psalms to pray this way. Now, if you know the Psalm prayers, you know that they are saturated, so to speak, with the image of falling down into watery chaos.

It's all over the Psalms. One scholar puts it away. The Psalms are brimming with watery imagery. I like what he said. The Psalms are aquatic prayers. Psalm 69.

Save me, O Yahweh, for the waters have come up to my neck. Boy, I can feel that line. I sink in the miry depths where there's no foothold. I've come into the deep waters.

The flood engulfs me. Rescue me from the mire. Do not let me sink. I've prayed that many times. Deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me, or the depths swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

[26 : 46] Answer me quickly, for I'm in trouble. Having grown up on those kinds of prayers, Jonah has at his disposal all these words and images as he goes down, down, down.

And his prayer follows the normal pattern of the prayer songs. He names his trouble. He cries out in his trouble. God hears him in his trouble and acts on his behalf.

And then Jonah gives thanks for God's mercy and grace in trouble. He names the trouble. I was sinking deeper and deeper.

You hurled me into the sea, he says. Well, I thought the sailors had. Well, in the mystery of things, God is behind that.

And Jonah knows that he deserved to have been hurled into the sea. Into the very hearts of the sea. The current swirled around me. All your waves and breakers swept over me.

[27 : 48] The deep surrounded me. Seaweed wrapped around my neck. He feels the consequences of trying to run. Jonah 2.4 I have been banished from your sight, he says.

At least that's what he thinks is the case. It is, after all, what he wanted when he bought a ticket for Nineveh. I sank to the roots of the mountains, way down there in the water.

The earth beneath barred me in forever. He sees himself headed for what the ancient Near Easterners thought of this underworld, this city way down below the sea. Way down.

And then he sees himself getting close to shale. To the place of darkness and the dead. Another Old Testament scholar expresses Jonah's trouble. Having attempted earlier to flee to Tarshish from God's presence, he now finds himself destined for shale where he will be permanently isolated from God.

Jonah names the full extent of his trouble. And then cries out to God. Jonah 2.2 In my darkness, in my distress, I called out to Yahweh.

[28 : 59] It is what Yahweh invites us to do right from the beginning of the story. Call out my name. Some of us are old enough to remember that song. You just call out my name and you'll know wherever I am, I'll come running to you.

Well, that's what Yahweh says. You just call out my name. Call it out. I love to hear my name. And when I hear my name, I run after it. Jonah 2.4 I've been banished from your sight, yet I look again to your temple.

Jonah somehow knows that all we need to do in our trouble is look to God. Look to God again. And in light of God coming down, we see in that temple the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jonah 2.7 When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Yahweh. I called to you. Yahweh, I'm drowning. And God heard him.

Jonah 2.2 He answered me. 2.2 You listened to my cry. 2.7 My prayer rose to you just as Nineveh's troubles are rising to God.

[30 : 08] 2.6 You brought me up from the pit, up from shale. Oh, Yahweh, my God, you brought me up. My God. My God. You see, Jonah's coming home. He's returning to the covenant.

God had made this covenant. I will be your God and you will be my people. Oh, Yahweh, my God, you brought me up from shale. You did not. Let me suffer the full consequences of my

disobedience.

Jonah experiences in that moment what God wants to do for Nineveh. He doesn't want Nineveh to experience the full consequences of their sin either. Jonah is rescued from the inherent trouble caused by his sinful choices.

Jonah names the trouble. Jonah cries out to God in the trouble. God hears him in the trouble and acts in the trouble. And then, following the pattern of the Psalms, Jonah gives thanks for God's mercy.

Jonah 2.9 I will sacrifice to you. I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. And note that he does that while he's still in the belly of the fish.

[31 : 13] Even though it's a smelly place. He knows this is the place of salvation for him. And he's grateful. And Jonah then reaffirms his vows. 2.9 What I have vowed I will now make good.

As a disciple, as a follower, as a prophet, he long ago one day said to Yahweh, I will go where you want me to go. I will do what you want me to do. It's what we as disciples, we as followers, have also said in our baptisms and on other occasions.

I will go where you want me to go. I will do what you want me to do. Jonah still does not want to go to Nineveh. He does not want Nineveh to experience grace and mercy even though he just experienced it in spades.

He doesn't want to go. But he wants to keep his vow. I think Jonah can sing the song we've been singing. Where you go, I'll go. Where you stay, I'll stay.

When you move, I'll move. I will follow you. Whom you love, I will love. Not quite yet. Now Jonah says, no, no, no. I can't sing that line, but I did promise I would go.

[32 : 23] And he keeps his vow. And then he gathers the whole prayer under that great declaration. Jonah 2.10. Salvation is from the Lord.

Salvation is of Yahweh. Of course. Those two words always belong together. Yahweh and salvation.

For Yahweh is salvation. And when he comes to earth, he takes the name Jesus, Yeshua, which means Yahweh saves. Because the God to whom Jonah prays is the God who feels.

God hears Jonah's prayer. And because the God to whom Jonah prays is the God who is able, God acts to save Jonah.

Because the living God, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, feels for people in trouble. He hears our cry in trouble.

[33 : 26] And because the living God, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, is able, he comes into our trouble. And he does for us what we could have never imagined.

Like sending a great fish. And like raising the crucified Jesus from the grave. It seems to me that the only response to a text and sermon about prayer is to pray.

You might be here and you might be experiencing some very significant trouble. And what I'd invite you to do now is a little risky to do. But I sense this is the right thing to do.

I would invite you to just put up your hand if you're facing some significant trouble. Or if you have a loved one who is in trouble, just put up your hand.

It doesn't have to be high. So that people around you can see that hand. And then with those of you look and see who has a hand up.

[34 : 45] And will you gather to pray for those people? Okay? Can you do that? You can pray. Just follow Jonah. Lord, have mercy on this person in trouble.

Okay? Do you see the hands? Don't be shy. Just gather around those folks who have their hands up. Now more hands are going up. They want to be prayed for. Back behind you, George.

Okay? And just pray for a season and then I will pray. Thank you.

Thank you.

You might have been too shy to put up your hand. So just in the quiet, name the trouble you're facing or the trouble your loved ones facing. Just name it.

[36 : 26] And then cry out on behalf of that person or cry out for yourself.

Oh, Lord. Oh, Yahweh. Hear me in my distress. Thank you. Oh, dear God.

Thank you for the book of Jonah. thank you for opening yourself up to us. Thank you for revealing that you are not a God who is distant from us but you are right here in the thick of it all and you feel it with us.

And thank you for demonstrating that you're able to do something to do something about the trouble. We don't need to tell you that all over there's trouble and we don't need to tell you that many people don't know how to call out to you so we do it for them.

Lord, hear their cry. And be this wonderful, great God to them. At this we pray in Jesus' name.

[37 : 53] Amen. Now, we've been singing a song to God, to the Lord Jesus over the last couple of weeks and I think the benediction is he's going to sing it back.

I won't sing it, but he's going to sing it back to us. I will follow you. Where you go, I'll go. Where you stay, I'll stay.

When you move, I'll move. I will follow you. Whom you love, I'll love.

How you serve, I'll out-serve you. If this life you lose, I give you mine. I follow you. All the way.

You can't get away. I'll follow you. Thank you. Thank you.