

Swallowed By Mercy

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[0 : 00] Alright, I want you to picture with me that you are working for a major company. Let's say this company stretches across all of Saskatchewan. It has about 30,000 plus customers and you are the head of the marketing department.

Now you have a major job that needs to be completed by the end of the week and you have been working on this task for months. And you are about halfway through the week, you are almost done, you are going to have it completed by the end of the week.

You will have it sent off and things will be good. But somebody you work with who you already have a hard time getting along with, they end up screwing up the project.

And it's not major, but it's just enough that it throws off your timeline and it's not going to be done by the end of this week. Now because of this, you receive an email and your supervisor is asking you why this project is late.

And they're also asking you to apologize to each one of your suppliers and explain why it's late. And because of this email, you are outraged because you weren't the one who screwed it up.

[1 : 04] It was this person you're working with and you just, you can't understand why you're responsible to apologize when it was their fault for this screw up.

So in this moment, you have to decide, are you actually going to send this email and take the hit? Or do you want to find fairness? Is it their fault?

So you just leave it and let them be responsible. So in this moment, you might want it to be fair rather than seeing mercy. And that's kind of what we see here with Jonah. Jonah was called to go to Nineveh, but he didn't think Nineveh was worthy of receiving mercy.

He wanted it to be fair. So Jonah didn't listen to God's call and ran when he was called to go to Nineveh. So we're going to be looking at Jonah 3 today, but I'm going to give you a bit of context just to catch you up to speed.

Because we're obviously skipping 1 and 2. So the first person we see is we see Jonah. Jonah. He's a prophet of Israel, which was God's chosen people. And then we see Nineveh.

[2 : 07] Nineveh was a large city. It was about 100 to 200,000 people, which doesn't seem very large today. That would be smaller than Saskatoon.

But back then, that would be a very big city. It was the capital of Assyria, which Assyria and Israel didn't get along very well. And it was right on the Tigris River, which made it a military powerhouse, which caused Nineveh to be very intimidating to approach.

And then we see Tarshish. It was a city on the opposite side. It was about 1,500 miles the other way. It was a port city. And to put it into modern terms to help you understand.

Let's say that Jonah was in Regina. And God called him to go to Toronto. So that's way east. And Jonah turns the other way and goes to Vancouver. So that's not like perfectly down to the kilometers.

But it will help you get the idea of Jonah going the completely opposite direction. It wasn't where he's like, well, I'll just go to the city beside. Like, I'll go to Hamilton inside of Toronto. He like turned the other way and said, get me away from Nineveh.

[3 : 14] I don't want to go to Nineveh. And part of it might have been that he didn't think Nineveh was worthy of hearing this message. And part of it might have just been that Nineveh was very intimidating. So yeah, we're going to look at verse 1 quickly before we go.

Chapter 1 before we go to chapter 3. Just to catch you up to speed. Most of you probably know the story of Jonah. But we're just going to fill you in. So Jonah 1, 7 to 10.

I'll read it. And I'm reading from the ESV today. And they said to one another, come let us cast lots. That we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots.

And the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, tell us whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country?

And what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord. The Lord, the God of heaven. Who made the sea and the dry land.

[4 : 15] Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them. So here we see that Jonah ran from Nineveh, went the other way.

He's on this ship. And this storm comes. And they are like, we need to throw somebody overboard. Because this isn't working out. And that's when Jonah says, hey guys, sorry.

I didn't listen to God. And that's where he gets thrown overboard. Now that could be the end of Jonah. That could easily be it. That could be the end of my sermon. I could sit down.

Boom. Jonah's dead. He's in the water. But then we see verse 17. Verse 17. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Now this is probably the first thing that comes to mind when you hear Jonah. You think a big fish. Or maybe a whale. Depending on how you heard it. And often we just think, oh there's a great fish or there's a big whale.

[5 : 17] And maybe we even think that it was bad that this great fish came to swallow Jonah. But this was actually a true act of mercy because Jonah was left out there to swim or sink.

And it could have been the end of Jonah. But this fish was a true act of mercy because it gave Jonah a second chance to obey. And that's how we get to chapter 3 here.

So I'm going to read chapter 3. 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.

[6 : 18] 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 of his nobles. Let neither man nor beast. Herd nor flock. Taste anything. 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. And before I jump in. I'm just going to pray. Lord I thank you for this message.

[7 : 16] That you've given to us in Jonah. And just the ways that. We can see this story of Jonah. And see your mercy. And your goodness. Throughout it. And I pray that. As I just continue to.

Share your message here. That you would just speak through me. And just calm my nerves. And just allow the words. To sit in our hearts. And that we'd be able to walk out of here today.

Just knowing more about you. I pray these things in your name. Amen. Alright. So first we're going to take a look. At verses 1 and 2.

Where God shows mercy to Jonah. So the first thing we see. Is that the word of the Lord. Came to Jonah a second time. Right away. That sticks out. Because. These words here.

Say arise. Go to Nineveh. The great city. And call out against it. The message that I tell you. Now. As I read these next words. I want you to think of this message. He gets the second time.

[8 : 14] I'm going to read you. The message he got the first time. Arise. Go to Nineveh. That great city. And call out against it. For their evil. Has come up before me. So what I just read.

Was. What God called Jonah to do the first time. And here's. What he calls him to do the second time. Right away. What I noticed. Is that. This message doesn't change much. The wording is slightly different.

He just adds on to the end of it. At the beginning. But. Really this. This message doesn't change. And what sticks out. Is how God. Says this to Jonah. So kindly. And graciously. Um. Maybe you guys as parents. Can understand what it's like. To say something a second time. Whether it's. Emptying the dishwasher. Or picking up toys. I mean. I don't have kids. But I know what it was like. When I was a kid. And if I was asked to. Clean up my toys. And my mom comes into the room. Later. It didn't sound so kind. The second time. It was. Simon.

[9 : 08] I told you to do this. Why didn't you do this? And. That's what we could have expected. From God. To go in there. A second time. And. Be visibly upset. But here we see that.

God. Tells Jonah so kindly. To do this. A second time. And. The fact that he even. Allowed him to do it. A second time. Is. Just so cool to see. Because again.

We saw the. The fish. Swallowing up Jonah. That could have been. The end of Jonah. And this would have been. The end of the story. But God. Saved Jonah. For a specific purpose. And he. He doesn't change. What he's asking Jonah to do. He has the same task. For Jonah. And he just asks him. To do it. So I'm just going to give you. A bit of a story. To help you paint the picture. A little bit better. So there's a student. Who had a major assignment due. And he completed this assignment. But he didn't complete it. Fully to how he was supposed to. So.

[10 : 02] So. He assumed that he would. Fail this assignment. And maybe even fail the class. But. As he goes to his teacher's office. His teacher looks at him. And says. I asked you to do this assignment.

A certain way. And you didn't complete it properly. But I'm going to give you. A second chance. To complete this assignment properly. And he doesn't change the assignment. He doesn't make the assignment. Harder. As a punishment.

He doesn't make it easier. Rather he just says. I want you to do. Exactly what I asked you to do. The first time. And that's exactly what we see here. God doesn't change. What he's asking Jonah to do.

He just asks him to do it again. Saying. This is what I told you. Now do it again. And this time. We see that Jonah does obey. And that's where we get to verse 3 and 4.

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.

[10 : 59] Going a day's journey. And he called out. Yet 40 days. Nineveh shall be overthrown. So here we see. The size of Nineveh. Earlier I was talking about how big it was.

But this really helps us to see how big it is. So it says that. Nineveh was three days journey in breadth. Now that doesn't necessarily mean. That going from. The west side. All the way to the east. Takes three days. But rather what it means is. To go through the city. To preach the message. It would take three days. And as my study notes say here. It sums it up really well. It says it would take Jonah three days. To preach God's message. Throughout the whole city. So for example Davidson. It would maybe be. Two hours breadth. Just going through Davidson. Making all the stops. To share this message. But Nineveh was a very large city. And maybe you can think of say a city like Calgary. Where it's like you got to go to the zoo.

[11 : 56] And maybe Heritage Park. And maybe catch a Flames game. And it would take about three days to do the city of Calgary. So that's kind of what it means by this. It wasn't a three day walk across. Rather it took three days to go through the city.

So that's what it would take. Three days to go. And share this message with Nineveh. And then we see that Jonah. Goes a day's journey. So he's one third of the way through. He's still got two more days to go. And then he gives this message. Yet forty days. And Nineveh shall be overthrown. Now this message. Could have easily been sent in a text. Obviously back then they didn't have text. But it's just. It's so small. It's not some big long letter. That's like. Here guys. Read this. It's just. This is what he has to say. He stands in the middle of the city.

And says. Forty days. And you guys will be overthrown. And just like that. That's all he had to say. And it makes me think of. Like a fire alarm. Or an amber alert. Where.

[12 : 54] A fire alarm. All it takes is one person. To pull the trigger. And it'll send an alarm. Throughout the whole building. And everybody knows. Or like an amber alert. It takes one person.

To press that button. And everyone's phone starts buzzing. And everyone knows. That there's this alert. And we need to do something. And that's kind of what I see here. Is. Jonah. He goes. And just does this.

This simple thing. That God called him to do. Gives this. One sentence. And Nineveh. Knows the drill here. They know what they need to do. And. God doesn't ask Jonah.

To do anything crazy. He doesn't say. Go and start dancing. In the middle of the city. And all this. Like. All he says is. Go. And give this message. It was one sentence.

And what's super cool. Is he didn't just say. You go to Nineveh. Jonah. And I'm just going to stay here. And watch from a distance. But he's there with Jonah. And Jonah. Is just speaking God's message.

[13:51] And we see that. When we look further. Verses five to ten. 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 rose 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. 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.

[14:50] God relented of the disaster. That he had said he would do to them. And he did not do it. So here we see. That earlier I was saying that.

God is using Jonah. And we see that in verse 5. And the people of Nineveh believed God. It doesn't say the people of Nineveh believed Jonah. But they believed God. They knew that these words coming out of Jonah's mouth.

Were a message from God. And. That just continues to show us how. Jonah wasn't being asked to do something on his own power. He was just being asked to do what God had asked him to do. And through his obedience. This message was able to spread across Nineveh. Now Nineveh was an evil city. And seeing them repent so quickly.

Kind of blows me away. Because. It could have easily said that. Jonah gave this message. And. Nineveh attacked him. Or they. They tried to.

[15:48] They tried to kill Jonah. But rather they hear the message. And. They repent. And not only does it say that they believed God. And stop there. But it shows what they did.

They called out for a fast. And put on sackcloth. From the greatest of them to the least of them. So back in that day. When somebody put on sackcloth. It was something that was uncomfortable to wear.

And it showed grieving. And this just shows that they were. Truly grieving over their sin and evil. They didn't just say. I believe God. Cool. I'll go on with my day.

But rather. They believe what God had to say. And in. Response to that. They go and repent. And there's a full 180. Shift. And we see that from the people of Nineveh.

But then. In verse 6. We also see it from the king. The word reached the king of Nineveh. And he arose from his throne. Removed his robe. Covered himself with sackcloth. And sat in ashes.

[16:46] And then it says. That he made a proclamation. For all of Nineveh. So earlier I was saying. That Jonah made it. One third of the way into the city. He's done one day's worth.

And the king is basically saying. Thanks Jonah. Now I'll look after this. He uses his. Royal powers. To. Go and send a message. Throughout all of Nineveh.

So Jonah's work. Is basically done here. The king's. Taken over. He says. I got this. And. He makes it something. That all of Nineveh is going to do. We as a city. We're going to repent.

And we are going to fast. And it just. It shows true repentance here. Because it's. It's not just. We believe God. And maybe we'll make it look like. We are repenting.

But we see true repentance here. And. It blows me away. That this is. A completely opposite response to Jonah. Jonah. If you didn't know the story. At the beginning.

[17:39] And I told you. We have. A prophet of God. And we have an evil city. Now who's going to listen. To God first. You probably would say. Oh well. The prophet of God. Now I guess technically.

He responded first. But the first time. God spoke to Jonah. Jonah turned. And ran the other way. But. When God spoke through Jonah. To Nineveh. They didn't turn. And run the other way. They turned. A full 180. And repented. And it was. Yeah. It's just cool to see. How it was. It's an opposite response. To what Jonah did the first time. And. It's not really. What we would expect. From such an evil city. I want you to think. Of the worst person. That you know. Maybe it's somebody. Who was a bully in school. Maybe they. Have vandalized property. Or they've. Abused others. Or. Whatever it is. That makes them. The worst person you know. Now imagine. That person.

[18 : 34] Walks in these doors today. And they hear a message. On repentance. And on the gospel. And in response. They decide. To repent of their sins. Change their lifestyle.

And start walking with God. When I mentioned. To think of the worst person you know. Is that what you thought right away? Did you think. Oh. They'll walk into these doors. And repent. Or did you have them written off?

Do you think of that person. And say. Oh. They're too far gone. They've done too much evil. God wouldn't save them. They're. They're too far gone. And that's. That's what we see with Jonah. Towards Nineveh.

Jonah thought that Nineveh. Was too far gone. They wouldn't be able to repent. He's like. I'm not wasting my time. If I go to Nineveh. It's this scary city. They'll probably just kill me. For going in here.

And sharing this message. But Nineveh. They respond in a way. That we wouldn't expect. And. For me. Mentioning the worst person. You know. You probably wouldn't expect them.

[19 : 31] To come into here. And repent. Just like. Jonah didn't expect that. From Nineveh. But it shows us. That God. Is not eager. To destroy. His people. He could have easily said.

Sorry Nineveh. You've done too much evil. And I'm going to wipe you out. Or he could have looked at Jonah. And said. Sorry Jonah. You ran. And I'm just going to let you.

Sink here. In this. Ocean blue. But he doesn't do that. He's not eager to destroy. Rather. He's eager to see repentance. From his people. And that's. Why he gives Jonah.

That second chance. And that's why he uses Jonah. To speak to Nineveh. Now. You might be wondering. So why would Nineveh. Receive mercy? It's one thing.

If it was like. Some. Some good city. That. They followed God. But. They just. They struggled along the way. And God gave them another chance. But like Nineveh. They were. Evil. They attacked Israel.

[20 : 26] Which was God's people. Like. Nineveh was not great. So why would Nineveh. Receive mercy? And maybe today. To put it. In terms you might understand better. Is like. For example. Let's think of Las Vegas.

Like it's nicknamed. Sin City. So like. Would you expect. God. To show mercy. To a place like Las Vegas. Or are they too far gone? Then we see.

Verse 10. When God saw what they did. How they turned. From their evil way. God relented. Of the disaster. He had said he would do to them. And he did not do it. Now this.

Is my favorite verse. Out of the 10. Because. First we see Jonah. Saying. Yes. To God. After it took a second try. So Jonah. Obeyed God.

Cool. Then Nineveh repented. Cool. Both those things are cool. But that could have been. All for nothing. If God said. Too late. I'm destroying Nineveh. But rather. Because of these actions.

[21 : 24] Because of Jonah's obedience. Even though it took a second time. And because Nineveh repented. God chooses. To relent. Of the disaster. That he had said he would do to them. And I feel like this just shows.

God's power so much. And his mercy here. And. We shouldn't necessarily be surprised. That. He would show wrath. Rather what. What should surprise us.

Is his mercy. Like Nineveh. They deserve to receive God's wrath. Jonah. He ran from God. He would deserve his wrath too. We today. As sinners. Would deserve God's wrath.

But what should surprise us. Is the way that God shows mercy. And. Not surprise us. In something that we wouldn't expect. From his character. But rather. We shouldn't overlook. This mercy.

It should be something. That we should be thankful for. And. Not. Not take it lightly. When we read this. We should be like. Wow. That's amazing that God would do that. Like Nineveh. They didn't deserve mercy.

[22 : 24] For how evil they were. But yet. God gave them mercy. And that's the same for us today. We should not overlook this. This mercy that is shown. But we should. Be thankful for this mercy.

That God shows. And. I just want to leave this message. With you guys. That God wants our heart posture. Set on him. Now.

The reason I say that. Is we see Jonah. In the beginning. His heart posture. Was not set on God. He got this message. And. His first response. Wasn't.

Okay God. I'll listen to you. His response was. No. I'm going the other way. And then. We see Nineveh. They were evil. Their heart posture. Is not set on him. But we see Jonah.

When he sets his heart posture. On God. When he decides. To obey. And go to Nineveh. God is able to work through him. And share this message. And.

[23 : 17] Jonah didn't have to do anything outrageous. He just had to have his heart posture. Set on God. And obey. What God wanted him to do. And God was able to work through him. And that's the same with Nineveh.

When they repented. And set their heart posture. Towards God. God was able to relent. Of the disaster. That he had said he would do to them. So we see here. That the heart posture.

Shifting. Is what shifts the story here. On us today too. Our heart posture. Might be on different things. But.

God isn't asking us. To do something outrageous. He's just asking us. To shift our heart posture on him. And make him our focus. And he'll work through us. We see. From Jonah.

In Jonah chapter one. He has a heart posture. That is not set on God. But in Jonah chapter three. We see that it is. Is set on God. Now I want you to think.

[24 : 11] Do you have. A Jonah one heart. Or a Jonah three heart. Is your response. To run from God. And what he calls you to do. Or is your response. To obey.

What God has called you to do. God's not necessarily. Asking us to do anything outrageous. Maybe in human terms. It sounds uncomfortable. What he might ask us to do.

But we see here that. Even a scary city. Like Nineveh. Jonah is able to enter it. And God uses Jonah. So are our hearts. Like Jonah. In chapter one.

Where we hear God calling us. And we're scared. And we run from him. Or do we have our hearts set. On God. The way that Jonah is. In chapter three. And then.

The last thing we can take from here. Is the repentance of Nineveh. And there's kind of three different truths. We can take about repentance. So firstly. We see that.

[25 : 07] They repent very quickly. They don't say. We believe God. Cool. Maybe in the future. We'll do something. Or. We'll. Make it look like. We repent on the outside.

But on the inside. Not really care. But rather. They. They instantly. They say. Believe. We believe God. And then they go. And they. Sit in ashes. And wear sackcloth.

Like to me. That doesn't. That doesn't show. Like. Oh yeah. We'll. We'll repent later. But it shows that right then. They're like. We need to do this. Because we don't have much time. Otherwise God will destroy us.

And we see that they repent. With emotion. It's not just that they repent. Outwardly. But inwardly. Do as they wish. We see that. They truly. Repent.

With the. Fasting. And the sackcloth. And the ashes. It just. It shows. More than just an outward repentance. But an inward repentance. And then lastly.

[26 : 04] What we can see with repentance. Is. Nineveh. They repent. And later down the road. Nineveh. Again. They're not so great. So. We might say.

Oh well. This repentance. Wasn't true. But. Rather. What we need to see from this. Is that repentance. Isn't a one time thing. We need to live a life of repentance. Because. Nineveh.

They repented. And then they went back to their evil ways. And we today. We can repent. Of our sins. And our actions. And continue to drift away. But this should be a call.

To not just repent once. But to live a life of repentance. So. We can see Nineveh. And take some truths about them. But. In the end.

We shouldn't just repent once. Like Nineveh. We should be living a life of repentance. Lastly. I'm going to. Take a look at the New Testament here.

[26 : 58] We're going to go to. Romans 2. 1 to 4. Where it says. Therefore. You have no excuse. Oh man. Every one of you. Who judges. For in passing judgment. On another.

You condemn yourself. Because you. The judge. Practice. The very same things. We know that the judgment. Of God. Rightly falls on those. Who practice such things. Do you suppose.

Oh man. You who judge those. Who practice such things. And yet do them yourselves. That you will escape. The judgment of God. Or do you presume. That the riches. Of his kindness.

And forbearance. And patience. Not knowing that God's kindness. Is meant to lead you. To repentance. So we see here. Judgment. Maybe you look at Jonah.

And judge him. And say. Why would. Why would Jonah run from God? Why would he do that? Why wouldn't he just listen to God. The first time. Now we wouldn't have the whole story. Of the fish. He could have just listened. The first time.

[27 : 55] Or maybe. You're judging Nineveh. From the eyes of Jonah. Saying. Why would they receive mercy? That doesn't make sense. But we're. We're not supposed to. Judge in that way.

Rather. Rather. We should see. What Jonah did. And take that as a lesson. Or see what Nineveh did. And take that as a lesson. And lastly. Looking at. Matthew 12.

40 to 41. For just as Jonah. Was three days. And three nights. In the belly. Of the great fish. So will the son of man. Be three days. And three nights. In the heart.

Of the earth. The men of Nineveh. Will rise up. In the judgment. With this generation. And condemn it. For they repented. At the preaching of Jonah. And behold. Something greater.

Than Jonah. Is here. So we see a gospel connection here. We see Jonah. And then we see. Jesus. Jonah. He almost died.

[28 : 51] But then he was able. To give God's message to Nineveh. But then we see Jesus. He truly did die. So that he can. Fulfill. What we see.

In the Old Testament. And it just shows us that. That Jesus is the greater Jonah here. And. We see that. Three days. And three nights. In the belly of the great fish.

Was Jonah. But the son of man. Will spend three days. And three nights. In the heart of the earth. And this here. It just. It really ties it all together. Because we see. God's mercy in Jonah.

And we see repentance. Repentance. But. In the end. What we should see. Is that. Jesus is the true answer here. Jesus is the greater Jonah. Let's pray.

Lord. I thank you for. The words that you've given to us. And. Just the truths that we've been able to. See from this passage. And I pray that we would. Desire to.

[29 : 51] Live a life of repentance. And just be thankful daily. For the mercy that you show to us. And I thank you for. Just the way that you show us. That you are the greater Jonah.

And that. We can rely on you. In our lives. And yeah. I pray that we would. Just take these truths with us. This week. And. That we would not just. Hear them.

And say we believe you. And go about our days. But that we would. Believe you. And that we would fully repent. Of what we need to repent of. I pray these things in your name. Amen. Amen.