

# Jonah and Jesus: God's Unstoppable Plan

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[0:00] We're going to read the Bible now. If you can open up your Bible to Jonah 1, verses 1 to 16.!

He said, Threatened to break up.

Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God, and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship, and had lain down and was fast asleep.

So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.

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.

[1:39] Then they said to him, Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?

And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. 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.

Then they said to him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?

For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

[2:45] So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Okay, well, thanks everyone. I'm really excited to be preaching today.

It's been about two years since I preached here, which, I know, thank you Sarah Morris, that's the reaction that I had. Sarah was like, two years, it's been quite a while, so I'm really stoked to be here today.

And we're starting a series on the book of Jonah today. So Jonah chapter one. Jonah is my favorite ending to a book in the Bible ever.

All so much cattle? That's the end of the book of Jonah. I don't know if you've got that far through the book. They're the last three words. Random.

[3:44] I, for about 10 years, have had, this is a bit of a confession to start, have had quite a weird, complex, morbid fascination with tornadoes.

I don't know if anyone else here has gone down YouTube tornado rabbit holes. Yes, I can see one. It's a bit of an odd thing.

It's actually a bucket list of mine that I want to see a tornado before I die. Okay. I can't tell if that's a me too or if that's a you're crazy.

I think it's probably a bit of a mix. But in Australia, we don't actually have many tornadoes. There's been a few. In fact, this is a fun fact for you.

The strongest tornado ever in Australia was in Bula Dila. Who knew it could be that close? But we don't get many. We get a few. The best one probably filmed in Australia, and I'm hoping this is going to click through.

[4:50] This is probably the most impressive looking one it was in. Just between Bathurst and Lithgow, if you know where that is. Decent.

Like that tornado. Pretty good. You know, it's a decent size, but it's not particularly impressive, let's just say. Now, if you want a proper tornado, we're talking the big boys here, there's really only one country that you can go to.

Oh, Australian tornadoes part one if you want to go down the rabbit hole, which suggests there's a part two as well, so you can do that in your own time. But the big ones are found in the US.

Now, this is an example of another one that was filmed in America. Now we're talking. Look at this. Isn't that massive? That's the type of tornado I want to see before I die. I want to go into... Katie and Kevin are like, no, you don't want to see that before you die.

[6:03] Have you guys ever seen one in America? No. Yeah, but I'm sure the damage in it makes the news. See, I'm a bit removed from it. I recognise that. But that's impressive. That's something that I think is super exciting.

Now, again, I don't know if you know much about tornadoes, but that is not even the start of how big a tornado can get.

This is one that was in South Dakota. In case it's not immediately obvious, that whole thing is a tornado. It's called a wedge tornado, and it is terrifying.

Like, no-one wants to be in front of that thing. And I think I'm very happy to see the big majestic one. You can kind of see it in the middle of the day. I'm very happy if I don't see one of these in my lifetime.

That is just terrifying. Now, people have all different types of reactions to tornadoes. Some are fascinated. Some are horrified.

[7:09] This is a reaction. This is a very famous... You didn't think you were going to be coming here to church today for a tornado rundown, but here it is. This is a very famous video of a guy who was in his house when a tornado was coming in his house.

Now, this is the start of the video. You can kind of see it there in the background. We're now going to skip, because this obviously goes for quite a while.

We're going to skip about a minute and a half in. Now, this is real. This is pre-AI days. The guy is still filming. He's still filming.

Anyway, this video, it actually continues for like another 30 seconds, and it's basically this chunked-out noise over a black background. But I think the reason I'm fascinated by tornadoes is because of the raw power.

Like, there's something just intensely amazing about seeing this type of thing coming towards you. And there's nothing that you can do about it.

[8:20] If you are in front of this thing here, like the guy in the camera, you can't tell that thing to change course. It's going where it wants to go. You cannot tell it that it should maybe quieten down or, I don't know, dissipate before it gets to you.

So that thing will do whatever it wants to do. And in this part of the Bible that we're reading today, Jonah chapter 1, we're going to see a completely unstoppable God.

We are going to see a completely unstoppable God intent on delivering His mercy to His enemies. And the question as we go through, Jonah, as we kind of go through the passage today that you should be asking yourself, is how will you respond?

When you're faced with this incredible force, unstoppable force that is our God, how do you respond? Do you run?

Do you pretend like it's not there, that it's not coming? Or do you recognise the reality of what's before you? So let's pray and we can get into it.

[9:33] Dear God, thank you that we can be here today talking about Jonah chapter 1. Such an incredible part of your words to us. I pray that you'd help us to hear.

I pray that you'd help me to speak clearly and cover over any of my failings if needed. Amen. Okay, we're going to open up Jonah chapter 1.

So we'll read from Jonah chapter 1, verse 1. If you've got your Bible there, then it's somewhere in the middle-ish. That is so unhelpful.

Look at your contents if you're not sure where it is. But the first thing, and actually while you're doing that, I'm going to swap stands because I already tell this is just going to slowly sink down as I'm going.

So I'm going to quickly swap stands while you find it. Okay, Jonah chapter 1.

[10:33] Now, first thing that we're going to see as we read through this is that Jonah shows us that rebellion is pointless in front of an unstoppable God.

Rebellion is pointless against an unstoppable God. So verse 1. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going... They should have called it Tarshish. That would make way more sense.

Found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord. So Jonah chapter 1, we're introduced to this man called Jonah, the son of Amittai.

We don't know much about Amittai, apart from the fact that he's his dad, I guess. But we do know that he's a prophet of God. So we're told that Jonah is a prophet. He was around during the reign of a king called Jeroboam II.

[11:43] So if you don't know much about the history of Israel, basically Israel is in two parts. There's a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Jonah's in the northern kingdom, and this king, Jeroboam II, is king over the northern kingdom.

And up until this point, every king has been evil. There's one that's a little bit mixed in there, but basically all the kings of Israel have been evil to this point. And Jeroboam II is no exception.

He is right on the same path as his fathers and grandfather. And when we look at Jonah, we actually know a bit about Jonah because he's mentioned in two kings.

So he's not just mentioned in the book of Jonah. We see in 2 Kings 14. And basically what it says in there is that Jonah was a prophet of God during Jeroboam II. And he told this king that he would be the one to expand the borders of Israel.

So again, kind of it had shrunk a little bit over time. Jonah is telling this evil king that actually he will expand the borders of the kingdom. Now Jeroboam II reigned somewhere between, look, we're talking ancient history, right?

[12:54] So there's a bit of an up and down as to what the range of when he might have reigned would be. But it's around 793 to 746 BC for argument's sake and so I don't have to keep giving a range.

Let's just say 770 BC. And so Jonah is the prophet during this time. But you get the very, very strong impression Jonah would be happy to have any other job.

He does not want to be a prophet. He would love to just be like a bricklayer or a carpenter or something like that. He does not want to be the prophet of God.

And in verse 1 and 2, God says to Jonah, I have a message for you that I want you to go and give to the people of Nineveh. I want you to tell them that their evil has come up before me.

Now what does Jonah do? Yes, Lord. Thank you for this amazing message. Consider it done. Don't stress God.

[13:58] I am on top of this. Of course not. We know that he does the opposite and he runs away. Now, usually when we read Jonah, if you're like me, you probably get to this point and you're like, fool, what a fool.

Jonah, silly man. And he is. But you know what? It's actually a little bit understandable. So if you don't know anything about the Ninevites, they're really a main city of one of Israel's biggest enemies, the Assyrians.

And during this time, Assyria is probably the most powerful nation on earth. And so it's no small feat that Jonah would go to an enemy city and preach to them God's message.

Jonah would love for these people to just be wiped off the face of the planet. And we find out later in Jonah that he suspects that God will be merciful to them if he goes.

So he hates them. And in fact, in about 50 years on from Jonah, the Assyrians end up conquering the northern kingdom of Israel. So the kingdom that Jonah is in, the Assyrians end up conquering.

[15:07] That is the people that God is telling him to go to. So you can kind of understand that. But even just from a selfish perspective, he's asking him to go to an enemy and tell them that they're complete rebels and they're evil.

Now to try and maybe make a bit of a poor illustration, imagine you were Ukrainian and God came and said, I want you to go to Moscow and I want you to tell them that they're evil and that the God of the whole universe is unhappy with them.

Best case jail, probably. Worst case torture and death. That is what God is asking Jonah to do. And I can kind of understand his hesitance when he does that.

So Jonah actually doesn't want to do this. Now he's concerned for his own safety. We can get the slide happening. Oh, this is a slide I forgot to say.

I'm going to actually... Okay, this is a slide that I should have said right at the start. So I'm going to do this quickly. It was talking about the scale of tornadoes. So... You can tell I've got a weird...

[16:23] I've just completely thrown the whole flow of my talk, but I think this is important. This is a map of Newcastle. There was a giant tornado in America, again, of course, called the El Reno tornado.

It happened in 2013. I'm not sure if anyone's heard of this tornado. Yes, yes. 4.2 kilometres wide. Which is ridiculous.

500 kilometre per hour winds, which is also ridiculous. This is... If church was the centre point of that tornado, that's how far it would stretch.

So we're talking, what, Lake Macquarie in the south, all the way up to nearly Woolworths at Edgeworth, if you know where that is. If you know where I live, this would knock out my house as well.

It's about a 10-minute drive to my house. So we're talking about a massive, massive tornado. Great, that's important for later and totally not helpful in the context of what I was talking about.

[17:25] But Jonah is running from God. He's rebelling against God. And God is unstoppable. His plans never fail. And Jonah is rebelling against this unstoppable God.

This is the slide that we're meant to be up to. This is where Jonah is running. So he goes to Joppa. This is in Miles, which is very unhelpful. It's one of the terrible inventions of the British.

2,500 kilometres is where he's going to Tarshish. It's basically the end of the world for someone like Jonah. God is calling him to go the other direction.

He's calling him to go to Nineveh. And it's about as far as you can possibly get from where God is calling him to go, Tarshish, other direction. And he's running away.

Now, Jonah is rebelling against an unstoppable God. His plans never fail. And Jonah's rebellion against this unstoppable God is pointless.

[18:31] There is no point in his rebelling. So we're going to read from verse 4. You've got Bible again, verse 4. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so the ship threatened to break up.

Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God, and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.

Then verse 7. 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 on whose account this evil has come upon us. What's your occupation and where do you come from?

What's your country and of what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. Then verse 12.

[19:33] He said to them, Pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not.

For the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Then in verse 15. So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

See, Jonah's rebellion against God is pointless. He's running away. He's trying to hope that maybe God won't see him, but God sends a massive wind to come and push him back.

And they kind of try everything that they can. Jonah has kind of told him he's running from our God. But God makes it clear to everyone that Jonah is the reason that they are in this mess.

They're the reason that they're in this horrific storm. And the sailors, to their credit, actually, very nobly, try and resist this storm.

[20:38] They throw stuff into the sea. They kind of, Jonah says, throw me out. And they're like, oh, don't worry. We'll try and row anyway. But they find that it is pointless. And eventually they throw Jonah into the sea, and he's swallowed up by the great fish.

And of course, that's what Jonah is most famous for, is being swallowed by a fish. But for all his efforts, Jonah finds out that rebellion against God is pointless.

Now, this is why I kept persisting with my out-of-place slides, because I want you to imagine that this El Reno tornado, four kilometres wide, 500 kilometre per hour winds, they reckon, over 500 kilometre per hour winds, is coming towards us.

It's coming out of the south. It's hit Lake Macquarie Maccas. There's some good things come out of this tornado. It's Bunnings. It's Costco. It kind of just evaporates into the sky.

It gets to KFC Glendale. And it is coming. There is nothing you can do. It will hit this building. Now, imagine if at that point you went, you know what?

[21:50] I'm not moving. I have been here since 8 o'clock this morning. I had to get my kids ready. My son spilt water on my preaching notes.

My wife still has two songs to go. We're not leaving. I'm staying here. And in fact, you can move. You can go around me. That's fine. You know, if you want to quieten down before you get here, that's an option as well.

But I'm not moving. Now, imagine if that was your response to the tornado coming down on you. Well, I would find out pretty quickly that no amount of rebellious attitude from me will make any difference to what that tornado does.

It's coming for me. It'll throw me hundreds of metres into the air. It'll obliterate this building. And it does not matter whether I tell it to do something or not because it is unstoppable.

And that's what we're seeing here in Jonah. We're seeing Jonah up against an unstoppable, irresistible God. The God of the universe who will deliver his plan and nothing that Jonah says or does will stop it.

[23:15] I wonder how well acquainted you are with God's plans. Maybe you're not really been to church much before. Maybe you're someone who kind of has been in and out of church.

But I wonder how much you actually know about God's plans. Because if a great God of the universe is tracking towards you, wouldn't you want to know what that plan is?

If that plan will be delivered and you cannot change it, he will deliver it, then I would put it to you that you probably want to know what that plan is.

You know, I think most people in Newcastle actually don't want to know the plans of God. I think Jonah is probably not the best example for what someone is like in Newcastle.

I think very few people in Newcastle that aren't Christian will rebel against it. They'll know God's plan. They'll know Jesus' death and resurrection. And they'll decide, no, I'm doing something anyway.

[24:21] I think actually most people are very happy being willfully ignorant of God's plan. Because if I know God's plan, then I probably have to change something about what I'm doing.

I think that's why a lot of people don't want to hear about God's plan. And I've been trying to think about why I find, I don't know if you're at church camp, if you're at church camp, or if you weren't at

church camp, there was a really strong, I guess, question put to us about evangelism. Are we telling people the gospel? And I've been trying to think about what is it that I find so hard about telling someone about Jesus? Because I actually do talk about Jesus a lot. I talk about him, like all my colleagues know I'm Christian. I talked about the fact I went to church camp, for example. My colleagues know that I go to this church, so they would know where to find me on a Sunday morning if they wanted to come and visit. I actually don't have a problem with telling them I'm a Christian. But where it gets hard is when I have to say, actually, God's plan applies to you as well.

[25:36] I think most people are happy for me to be a Christian. As long as it's for you. I don't want to know about it.

Like, that's fine, you do what you want to do, but I'm not someone who wants to know about the plans of God. They don't want to know that they're in rebellion to an unstoppable God. See, to properly tell others means that at some point, you're going to have to say something offensive and that they don't want to hear. And that is that they are at conflict with the plans of an unstoppable God.

And in Australia, there is almost nothing more offensive than to tell someone that they're living life the wrong way. I don't know if you've done it before, but it's kind of the unwritten rule in Australia that you don't talk about my life, you don't dwell too hard on my life and I won't do that to you. But it doesn't change the reality. Whether that person, that friend, that colleague, whoever it might be, family member, whether they know the plans of God, whether they believe the plans of God, makes no difference to the reality.

[26:57] There is an unstoppable God headed their way. And I think in Australia, most of our job is convincing people that they actually are in rebellion to this unstoppable God.

And we should be trying to help other people see, I think, the reality of this giant tornado bearing down on them. So if rebellion is pointless against an unstoppable God, faith is accepting the reality of an unstoppable God.

Now there's a really strong contrast in Jonah. If you see Jonah, he's kind of the guy who's running away, he's scared, he knows what God's plan is, and he's like, I want no piece of that. There is a contrasting reaction in Jonah.

I don't know if you picked it up as we read through, but the sailors actually have the reaction that Jonah probably should have had and the fear towards God that Jonah should have had. So we're going to read some of that again, but they put him to shame. So we're going to start at verse four. We're going to cover some of the bits that we already have talked about, but try and look at the reaction of the sailors in response to God.

[28:13] But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God, and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them.

But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship, and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to them, what do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we might not perish. 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, on whose account this evil has come upon us? What's your occupation?

Where do you come from? What's your country, and what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

[29:20] Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, what is this you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then he said to them, what shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, pick me up and hurl me into the sea, then the sea will quieten down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood.

For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you. So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

See, the sailors, they actually initially don't know what they're dealing with. They can see that something's going on. They know that this giant storm is happening, and these guys are very experienced.

[30:35] I don't know if you've ever experienced turbulence on a plane. You kind of don't freak out. It happens all the time. You're not supposed to worry. If the crew starts freaking out, then you start freaking out if you're on a plane.

That's when you know you're in big trouble. And in this part of the Bible, in Jonah chapter 1, the crew are freaking out. They're throwing stuff overboard. They're praying to their gods. I don't know how you kind of do that on a ship that's like rocking all around, but they're doing that.

They're really freaking out, and they start calling out to their gods, and they eventually go, this must be because of some reason. This is not a normal storm. We've been in storms before. And so they cast lots.

It's like throwing the dice, and it says that Jonah is the one who's put them in this situation. It's Jonah's fault. And Jonah tells them that it's because he's rebelling against God.

And they respond how Jonah should have responded. Sorry, say that again. What are you talking about? Why? You're running from God, and you're putting us in danger.

[31:43] You're on the same boat as us. You stupid person. Listen. That is how they respond. See, they recognize that they're up against an unstoppable God.

There's nothing that they can do. They recognize the reality that they are up against something that is unstoppable. And so eventually, they throw Jonah into the sea, and the storm stops.

And what do they say? It says that then, they feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. Now, when later in the week you go down the tornado rabbit hole, you'll notice that often what the storm chasers do, because this is a whole thing, is that people kind of try and predict where these tornadoes will be, and they'll find them and try and follow them, is that they try and not get in the way, because they recognize that if they put themselves in harm's way, there's nothing they can do.

They have no power. This thing will just throw them into the air. They realize that the tornado is unstoppable. Well, the sailors here recognize that they're up against an unstoppable tornado. They can't row against God. They can't fight against Him. They can simply accept the reality. They can accept that the God of the heaven, who created the sea and the land, will deliver His plans.

[33:21] See, in Jonah, God is to be feared. The men recognize that they have been fighting against this God. They have on board a man who is running from God.

And Jonah, I actually probably didn't do it justice when I read it out before, but when he's talking about who God is, and they're kind of grilling Him, and they're like, who are you?

Where are you from? And he's like, I'm a Hebrew. And they're like, okay, well, what God? He made the heavens, I guess. And the dry land, and I guess the sea.

Like, it's a ridiculous response from Jonah. He knows who God is. The sailors, they just recognize that they are up against an unstoppable God.

They fear Him, even though they don't know His full plans. Jonah knows His plans, and He runs. But for us, we know God's plan for the world.

[34:34] If you're a Christian here today, and you've been coming along to church for any length of time, you know God's plan for this world. We have faith in an unstoppable God.

We accept the reality that God will deliver His plan for this world, and there is nothing that can stop it. And unlike the unstoppable tornado, whether you believe in God or not, you have to accept God's plan for this world.

Whether or not you have faith in God, it actually makes no difference to the reality. The tornado is hitting. God is unstoppable. The tornado is unstoppable. To resist is like standing in front of that giant tornado coming towards you in stubborn rebellion about the reality that's coming.

You know, my Christian faith, no matter how it's going, sometimes it might be doing well. How much does that progress the plans of God if my faith is going well?

If I'm having a tough time and I'm kind of not reading my Bible very often and I kind of feel distant from God, how much does that stop the plans of God?

[36:01] When we see things in this world that seem like a departure from a Christian worldview, when we see people departing from God's way of living, should we pray as if God may not know that that's happening?

Should we pray as if somehow God's fighting the forces of evil and he's slowly losing the battle? God is unstoppable.

Nothing can resist him. I wonder if world events are keeping you up at night. I mean, the obvious one, what's filled today?

Like \$2.40? Diesel? Hang on, it's \$2.90 today? Are you wondering how you'll get by?

Maybe some of you, there was a mortgage rate increase recently, kind of freaking out, going, I don't know how we're going to handle this one. Are you worried about the world getting dragged into war?

[37:06] I don't know about you, but sometimes it feels like we're kind of just on this really long downward slide into a third world war. Maybe you're worried about what your kids are going to inherit.

I worry about that from time to time. Grandkids? What kind of a world are we bringing these kids up into? Maybe you feel like Australia is the land of the haves and the have-nots.

Like you want to buy a house, but it just keeps getting worse and worse and further and further out of reach. It feels like our society is just drifting further and further away from God, but our God is unstoppable.

He will deliver his plans. You think Donald Trump can get in the way of an unstoppable God? You think Anthony Albanese has any effect on the plans of God?

or Pauline Hanson or whoever it is that you're concerned about? To what effect does the unbelief of Australia have on the directions of an unstoppable God?

[38:18] Nothing. It is like me standing in front of the tornado shaking my fist. See, faith is not about giving God's plans a helpful push in the right direction.

It's accepting the reality of an unstoppable God. It doesn't mean we shouldn't care about this world. Don't hear me saying that.

I'm not saying we shouldn't care about what happens and that we shouldn't try and fight for a society that gives honour and respect to God's words and purpose. I'm not saying that.

But we don't need to worry when it goes against what we think should happen. A little while ago I, probably about five years ago, went through an existential dread about climate change.

Now, I'm not making a point about climate change. I don't care if you think it's real or not. But I had this existential dread that we were kind of going down this path where my kids are going to grow up in a world where it's a horrendous place to live.

[39:18] our God's unstoppable. Climate change isn't going to make a difference to God's plans. He knows it. He sees it.

He will always deliver his plans. Our God is unstoppable and all we can do is accept the reality of what he will do.

But what is the plan of our unstoppable God? Because I've kind of talked a lot about it up until this point.

He has a plan. It's coming. There's nothing he can do to move it. But what actually is that plan? Because Jonah points us to something much bigger than simply God's plan to save the Ninevites and we'll kind of hear more about that in future weeks.

Jonah points us to Jesus. The ultimate plan of an unstoppable God. I'm going to open up to Matthew chapter 12.

[40:23] If you've got your Bible open up to Matthew chapter 12. I'm going to start at verse 38 because Jonah is actually mentioned in the New

Testament as well.

He's mentioned a couple of times but we're going to read Matthew chapter 12. In this section, basically the background of what we're going to read is the Pharisees who are religious leaders of the day.

I actually was practicing this yesterday and had a slip of the tongue. I'm sure someone has invented this word but I thought it was fantastic. Pharisees. They basically are trying to catch Jesus out. They're trying to trip him up. They're trying to get him to say something that he doesn't mean. And this is what we come to where Jesus just before this has essentially called the Pharisees evil. That was unintentional. The Pharisees evil. Verse 38. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

[41:32] But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. But 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 at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

See, in Matthew, Jesus tells us that Jonah is actually a sign. It's a sign pointing to something that is far greater. Because just as Jonah is God's unstoppable mercy to the Ninevites, Jesus is God's unstoppable mercy to this world.

Now, throughout the book of Jonah, I said that there's some questions you should be asking yourself and that's about response. But there's other questions we should be asking. Who is going to be the perfect prophet who will actually be the one who delivers God's mercy?

Because Jonah is useless. He doesn't want to be there. He fights against him the whole time. Even after you would think being in the belly of a fish for three days, you would get on board with God's plans.

[42:57] We'll find out as we go through the series. Even then, Jonah still is frustrated and annoyed at God and thinks he should do something different. But we're meant to be asking, who is the one who will willingly submit to God's unstoppable plan?

who is the perfect one who delivers God's mercy? Because like the Ninevites that we see in verse 1, God calls us to realise that our evil has come up before him.

Without his mercy, we are standing in the path of his wrath at our rebellion. It's like a giant tornado coming towards you. Because humanity has not accepted and not recognised the reality of an unstoppable God.

We have rebelled against him. We have not given him his due place as the ruler of the world, the God of the heavens, the lands, the sea. We have turned our back on him and we've chosen to make our own reality, thinking that somehow, actually, my plans are unstoppable.

unstoppable. I'm the one who decides what happens. People can move around me. My plans are the ones that never fail. But Jesus tells us that Jonah is a sign that points to him.

[44:28] Jesus is the answer to those questions. Jesus is our perfect prophet. Jesus is the one who willingly submits himself to the unstoppable plans of his father.

And just as Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a fish, Jesus spends three days and three nights cast out from God's presence, dying on the cross and taking the wrath that we deserved.

Because just as Jonah's, in Jonah, we see that God's plan for the Ninevites is unstoppable. Jesus is God's unstoppable plan for saving those who accept the reality of his plan for the world.

Now imagine again that you've got the tornado bearing down your house. Imagine you're in this situation. You're seconds away. There's nothing you can do. You cannot run.

You cannot kind of stand against it. What should you do in this situation? If you're in, you've got the camera there, what should you be doing? You should be trying to seek shelter.

[45:40] That's why this video is so shocking because you're like, it's so the opposite thing to what you should be doing in the situation. You should be seeking a tornado shelter.

I don't know if you've seen a tornado shelter before. They're basically these big capsules. Imagine a shipping container almost, probably a little bit smaller. They usually dig them into the ground. They might put concrete around them or something to pack it in. The idea is that as the tornado goes over the top, you're under there safe, protected. That's kind of the whole idea of a tornado shelter.

In fact, there's another video, I chose not to show it. I think it's just, I recognise the kids in the room, that almost is identical to this video where a guy's filming a tornado coming towards his house and his wife had told him, we've got a tornado shelter, get into it.

This is the time that you do that. And the man, apparently his wife said to him that he wasn't scared. He would be fine, he's strong enough. She didn't need to worry about him.

[46:47] She went to the tornado shelter, he filmed the tornado, she survived and his body was found hundreds of metres away. how will you respond to the unstoppable God?

Because just like the tornado, God's judgement and wrath is coming directly for those who have rebelled against him. It's unstoppable, there is nothing that we can do to redirect the course. There's nothing that we can do to resist it. We have committed evil in the sights of God. We haven't recognised the reality that he's unstoppable, that he alone is the ruler of this world.

We don't recognise that God is the ruler of our life and so fury of God is heading our way and there's no escaping it. Now we certainly can't stand in rebellion shaking our fist.

You know how people often play the Bon Jovi I did it my way song? You can't do that in the face of God. God is unstoppable. Only a tornado shelter that can take the full fury of the wrath of a tornado can help.

[48:07] See we need Jesus. He is the shelter that we can stand behind. He shelters us from the wrath and he takes the penalty that we deserve by dying on the cross.

And he rises again to show that the penalty is fully paid. See this is where the tornado metaphor slightly breaks down because God is the one who provided that shelter.

God sent Jesus. He sent us as his mercy so that when his wrath against the sin and evil in the world came he would see Jesus and we would be saved.

So how will you respond to an unstoppable God? If you aren't a Christian here today and I'm not sure if that's you or not and maybe you aren't sure maybe you've been kind of putting the foot down into the tornado shelter but then like oh maybe it's fake maybe the tornado sirens aren't actually something to worry about maybe it's not going to be bad maybe it'll go around me if that's you then the reality is there is an unstoppable God coming your way he will deliver his plan for the world whether you recognize it or not if you walk out of this building and you say that guy talked for probably far too long I learnt some things about tornadoes the rest was psychopathic doesn't change the reality turn to God seek the tornado shelter seek

Jesus he's the only one that can save you from the wrath of a righteous God because he will deliver his plan and if you are a Christian well where are you taking shelter you know the plan of an unstoppable God this is not news to you I'm sure probably for the last 10 minutes something you've heard a thousand times before are you in the shelter or are you maybe kind of half out of the shelter maybe you're pretending like the tornado doesn't exist you kind of turn up on Sunday but it's mainly for appearances sake or maybe you've built your own shelter maybe it has a fantastic patio you'll have a good view from the deck when that tornado rips it up maybe you think you can hide behind your bank balance maybe that's you maybe you'll kind of show your phone up to the tornado as it approaches and says

[51:00] I've got a million there's nothing you can do maybe you'll be outside when the tornado comes yelling I'm the CEO of insert big company name here what are you seeking shelter in maybe it's your looks maybe you'll be like the storm will just be like damn I'm going a different way maybe you think your biceps you'll be able to punch the tornado apart but God's wrath against evil is unstoppable and there is nothing that we can do except come to Jesus and seek shelter he is the only one that can save and I mean how incredible thankful we should be that God has provided that way for us without it we are in the path we're the ones shaking our fists in defiance without God we're the ones turning our backs and

ignoring him it's his mercy that means we are saved see

Jesus is God's unstoppable plan so will you run will you try and flee it like Jonah did will you ignore it or will you turn to him will you take shelter in the saving work of Jesus death and resurrection and I quickly pray dear God thank you that you are a God who cares about evil thank you that you don't just let it slide and that you are a God who recognizes that our evil and the evil of the world is something that needs to be dealt with God you are an unstoppable God you're a God who we can take great comfort that he will deliver his plans and nothing can change it thank you so much for Jesus thank you that he is the shelter that we need thank you that because of him we can be saved from your wrath we are made right with you and

God I pray that for those here today or for all of us here today that you help us to remember that that plan will be delivered and there is nothing we can do about it except come to you and trust your son amen!