

Thrown Overboard

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[0:00] Amen. Amen.

So our Jonah sermon series continues. If you remember from last time, when we last encountered Jonah, he was just about to embark for his three-hour tour, so to speak.

He's on the run. He's on the run from what he has been called to do as God's prophet. But God called him to go to Nineveh, which is, of course, a city of an empire that is a threat to his own people, and to call out against them so that they might repent of their wickedness.

Now, Jonah doesn't think that's such a great idea. So God's prophet decides that he is going to disobey the Lord, and he goes on the run and boards a ship, a ship that is going in the opposite direction, thinking foolishly, even though he knows better, that he can somehow flee from the Lord's presence.

Now, I would imagine most of you know the story of the book of Jonah. But even if you didn't, you could probably guess that this isn't going to work out so well for Jonah.

[1:46] So let's pick up where we left off. Let's look at what happens next. And as we look, let's think about a few questions I want us to consider throughout our Jonah series.

What is Jonah up to here? And what is God up to? What does all of this tell us about the character of God? How does this point us to Jesus Christ? And what does this account mean for us?

So let's think about these things. And let's dive into the scriptures, starting with where we left off. Jonah chapter 1, starting in the fourth verse.

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. So we see here that God is not prepared and content to let his prophet go gentle into that good night.

And what we see here is not merely a natural event. The text is clear that God is causing this storm upon the sea, because his prophet Jonah has deliberately disobeyed his word.

[3:05] In verse 5 we read, 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 laid down and was fast asleep. Now there are a few things we should notice here.

First, the sailors realized, pagans that they are, that their hope of deliverance is divine intervention. So, they've already hurled their cargo into the sea.

That didn't help. Whatever they do, they can't compete with the storm. God is stronger than them. Whatever they do, God is still in control of the situation.

And the storm isn't relenting. His sovereignty is clear for all to see. So, they're terrified. What is God's reluctant prophet up to?

[4:12] He's taking a snooze. Now, the text isn't exactly clear on the question of whether he went to sleep before the storm, or after it started. But the effect is really pretty much the same when you think about it.

The pagan sailors, in their imperfect way, at least have enough sense that they should probably be calling out to their gods to help them. But Jonah isn't doing what you would expect a prophet of the one true God to do.

Calling out to the one true God. He ran, and now he's snoring below deck, oblivious to his responsibility. That doesn't last long.

He's roused from his sleep. We read in verse 6. 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. I get the sense from reading the text that this was probably a pretty rude awakening. I can't imagine that the captain was thrilled with Jonah being asleep while they're trying to fight the storm.

[5:26] As I thought about that, I remembered when I was a private in the army in basic training, how our drill sergeants would wake up people who weren't supposed to be sleeping. As you can imagine, it generally wasn't a pretty sight.

They didn't come up to us and gently whisper a wakey-wakey sleep he had. The captain's reaction looks like a fairly forceful thing. He's wondering why this guy is sleeping.

And while Jonah is probably rubbing the sleep from his eyes, notice what the captain tells him. The pagan tells him what he should be doing, calling out to God.

The captain's hope, interestingly, is in Jonah's God taking notice and deciding to act. They tried everything else. It didn't work. It's implied, I think, that the sailors know this is their last resort.

That Jonah's God might take notice of them and decide to save them. And then the ante is up, so to speak, as Jonah is identified as the guilty party.

[6:34] We read on. 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 is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?

Well, looks like Jonah is the problem. Everyone knows it now. They want to know who he is, where he's from, and what he has done to cause this awful storm to come upon them.

Now, look at how Jonah responds to their questions. Verse 9. 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.

Notice that he tells them about the God that he serves. Now, this isn't some local, tribal, pagan idol.

[7:47] Jonah is saying that this is the God who made everything that exists, who controls the sea, who sent the storm that is bearing down on us. That's the God that Jonah serves, and he has disobeyed him.

They get it. And they are trembling in terror. How do they respond? Verse 11. 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. Jonah's answer is interesting and surprising. Verse 12.

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.

Now, Jonah is kind of, sort of, starting to act again like you would expect the prophet to act. He at least acknowledges, Hey, this is my fault.

[8:58] This is my sin. There's a reason this has happened. And he tells them to sacrifice him to save their own lives. Now, as we might expect, they're a little bit hesitant to do that.

And can you really blame them? Is throwing someone into the raging stormy sea on the top of the list of things you would like to do? Probably not. So they try another way.

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. Well, that didn't work.

They are essentially powerless in the face of the Lord's mind. So what are they left with? We see that in verse 14. Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish through this man's life.

And lay not on us innocent blood. For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you. Now, these pagan sailors acknowledge something really astounding.

[10:17] They realize that it is Jonah's God. The God who created everything that exists. Who is ruling and reigning in this situation. They realize that God does as He pleases.

And as we think about this, we start to realize that in some measure they are acknowledging what Jonah, up to this point, knows but has chosen to ignore.

God is on His throne and His will will come to pass. So they do what Jonah tells them to do in verse 15.

They picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea. And the sea ceased from its raging. Now notice, the storm stops. The storm stops because God has chosen to bring it to an end.

Notice, finally, the effect that this has on the sailors. The men feared the Lord exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

[11:34] These guys saw an overwhelming display of the character and the might of the one true God. And having seen that, what do they do? They worship Him.

And can you even wonder why? They have seen and have believed that He created everything. They've seen that His power drove this storm and caused it to relent. They are in awe of this God of Jonah's. And they worship. So a lot happens in these few verses. There's a lot to unpack. Let's ask, what does all of this tell us, especially in light of the questions that I want us to consider throughout this series?

Well, let's start with what this tells us about Jonah and what he's up to. Jonah, in our passage, is still on the run from his responsibility. He's still disobedient to the word of the Lord.

[12:40] He's acting as if he can run from God even though he knows better. He abandons obeying the word of the Lord and finds himself taking a nap when he needs to call out to the Lord because of what he's done.

And its impact affects other people. We see him starting to come around, offering his very life to save those who were in danger, but they were in danger because of his sin and disobedience. As we will see, Jonah still has a lot to learn and it won't be pleasant for him. Now, lest we be tempted though to be too hard on Jonah, I have to admit that I am at least as stubborn and woeful as he is.

We can see ourselves in Jonah. Now, what is God up to in this passage? What's going on? What does it tell us about God? Well, we've seen first of all that the one God who created everything reigns as sovereign king over all that exists.

He rules the wind and the sea. And it doesn't end there. He is sovereign over us. What Jonah tried to forget is that we are called to love and obey him over all else.

[14:09] He is God and we are not. We see another thing about God in this passage. We see through the example of Jonah that God loves us with a love that is fierce.

God's love when we go astray won't stop short of really rattling us to bring us back to our senses. We see rightly that God is a jealous God.

God. He is not as C.S. Lewis describes one popular image of God the benevolent grandfather whose idea for the universe is that at the end of the day everyone would be able to say a good time was had by all.

That is not the God we see in the scriptures. Not the God we see in Jonah. His love is good but it is not always safe. Now let's ask this how do these verses point us to Christ?

I think it needs to be said that in Jonah who is an imperfect prophet I don't think there's any doubt at this point in our narrative that Jonah is imperfect we see a type we see a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ the perfect prophet.

[15:38] In the gospels we actually see a parallel account we see Jesus sleeping on a boat during a fierce storm don't we? But there is a world of difference between the two.

Jonah is sleeping because he's been disobedient to God and he has abandoned his vocation as God's prophet. Jesus is sleeping because he knows that he is perfectly obedient to the Father's will and he knows that he has authority to command the sea and the waves.

Jonah chooses when it comes down to it to his credit to offer his life to spare the lives of those who are in danger because of his sin to give himself over to death that the lives of others might be saved.

but Jesus who knew no sin chose to give his life for sinners dying a death on the cross to satisfy God's justice so that sinners might be saved.

We might say that Jesus is the perfect Jonah because he is the perfect prophet one without sin and one with the very authority of God. And Jonah giving his life to save the lives of others points us forward to our Savior who knew no sin but gave his life to save sinners.

[17:07] Something that Jonah couldn't do. Something that no one but Jesus has done or could do. What does this passage mean for us?

what does it mean in our lives as we consider Jonah on the run disobedient to God and reaping the consequences?

I think that this passage reminds us of one of the painful realities of Christian life. Something we all if we've been believers for any length of time have experienced.

We are as one hymn tells us prone to wander. I am. Are you? So is Jonah.

It's not that different from us is he? Certainly not in that way. But I want us to think about what we read in Hebrews 12 starting in verse 5 when we consider what happens when we turn in disobedience from the will and the word of the Lord.

[18:21] We read have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor be weary when reproved by him for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastised every son whom he receives.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

well, that's painfully true, isn't it? It hurts. But we have to remember as we read this account, as we read what happens to Jonah, we have to remember that Jonah, unfaithful though he was, was also God's beloved child and he encounters the discipline of the Lord in a pretty profound way here.

[20:04] So I have to say, brothers and sisters, we will all have trials in this life. A lot of things will arise through no apparent fault of our own, but they're things that God will allow for our good, for our growth and holiness.

Now, some difficulties will come our way to discipline us, because the Lord loves us and corrects us. Other difficulties will arise because of the stupid choices we've made.

It happens. And God will send those difficulties to us for our good. So don't be surprised if that happens to you, and it will, because the Lord loves us as a perfect father, and he will discipline us. Remember, I was talking to Mia the other day, and I had just gotten after her for misbehaving, and I said to her, Mia, the reason that you get in trouble with daddy when you do something wrong is because I love you, and I want you to grow up to be a good and decent person.

God, I am an imperfect father, but if I feel that way, then it's apparent to me how our perfect heavenly father must feel about us, how much he must desire our growth and holiness.

[21:38] If the way there is painful, that's just how it's going to be. So, when we find ourselves under the Lord's discipline, and it will happen, don't do what Jonah did.

Do what he resisted doing. Repent and return to the Lord. Renew your faith in and obedience to Jesus who gave his life that we might live and find your peace and the rest that is found only in him. That's the answer. That's what Jonah wouldn't do. Do that so that you may share in his holiness and bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness that God has trained you to bear.

In the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, Amen.