

# God hears Jonah

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Date: 23 July 2023

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Can everyone hear me now? I was saying we've been blessed with a good night's rest. The Lord has faithfully brought us through another week and given us the privilege of getting together again with fellow believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, just to worship Him together.
- He has blessed us with sunshine, with rain showers, God is good. This morning we'll be looking again into the book of Jonah.
- A number of weeks ago we were looking at chapter 1 and kind of covered what we really know about Jonah if we think of the children's story that most of us would have heard.
- How Jonah was sent to Nineveh, but he fled from God and a storm came up as he was on a boat and he was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a fish.
- [ 1 : 1 4 ] Kind of the main parts that we really know, but that's only chapter 1. There's more. And so I just thought this morning I'd just give a quick review on what we kind of looked at last time around in chapter 1.
- So the word of the Lord came to Jonah and he is to go to the great Assyrian city of Nineveh and to cry out against it.
- Nineveh is growing increasingly more wicked and this has come up before the Lord and it needs to be dealt with. But Jonah has no desire to go to Nineveh and so he flees from God's presence.
- He runs to Joppa and he gets aboard a ship. He's going to head for Tarshish. It was a couple thousand kilometers away from Nineveh. He thought he would be far enough away from the Lord that the Lord would change his mind on sending him to Nineveh.
- They haven't got out very far onto the sea. Jonah finds out the hard way that there is no place too far for the Lord to come looking.
- [ 2 : 3 4 ] So the Lord sent a great wind out on the waters. There was a mighty tempest on the sea and the boat is about to capsize. The mariners, in fear, they cry out to their God but the storm rages on.
- They throw their cargo overboard to make the ship lighter so it would possibly be easier to return safely to land again. Jonah is in the bottom of the ship sleeping through all of this and so the captain comes and awakes him and pleads with him to call on his God.
- Perhaps he would be considerate and not cause them to perish. There are lots that are cast and the lot falls on Jonah.
- So in response to the mariners' questions he tells them that he is a Hebrew and that he fears the Lord who created the sea and the dry land. Jonah knows full well that he is the reason for this great tempest.
- He knows that the Lord has sent this strong wind after him. And so he gives them instructions on what to do. He tells them to pick me up and throw me into the sea.

[ 3 : 56 ] Then the sea will be calm for you. Well, these sailors didn't want Jonah's blood on their hands and so they continued rowing harder and harder trying to return to land but it was no use.

And so after the sailors prayed to the Lord not to charge Jonah's blood against them, they do as Jonah had instructed them.

They throw him into the dark raging waters and the storm ceases. So this is where we left off last time. We want to continue onward from there this morning and see what becomes of Jonah.

We know that he doesn't die in the sea. He doesn't drown. But what exactly happens with Jonah and what can we learn from Jonah's experience?

Before we continue, let's just bow again in a word of prayer. Lord God in heaven, we come before you this morning. Lord, we praise and thank you for this beautiful day, for this opportunity to gather, to come together as brothers and sisters in Christ, to worship you, to open your word and to read it and to understand, to see what you have to say to us.

[ 5 : 27 ] Lord, this morning I just pray that you would anoint my lips. Help me to speak your word. Just give me the strength to do so and give the audience a willing ear to listen to your word.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right, so this morning as we look at the final verse in chapter 1 and then onward into chapter 2 of Jonah, the thing to pick up on to bring out is God's provision for Jonah, Jonah's prayer of distress, as well as God's deliverance for Jonah.

So the title that I gave to this message was God Hears Jonah. So the first point, God's provision for Jonah, we find that in the final verse of chapter 1.

The last time we were here in Jonah, we left off with Jonah having been cast into the sea, cast from the ship.

He's sinking down into those dark, raging waters. You know, for the mariners in the ship, on top of the water, the storm has calmed at this point.

[ 6 : 49 ] The waves have ceased, and they are safe again. But for Jonah, on the other hand, the storm is still raging.

He isn't safe in that boat on the water. He is quickly sinking into the dark depths of waters that are fiercely raging while he was still in the boat.

And so naturally, we would think this to be the end for Jonah. But bound to the natural.

Is our God bound to the natural? Is our God limited? We know that He is not. Praise be to our God that we know that He can do all things.

As the words of the children's song goes, He is so strong and mighty, there is nothing our God cannot do.

[ 7 : 56 ] You know, God had spoke to Jonah. He had wanted him to go and cry out against Nineveh. Their wickedness had come up before him, and it could not go unpunished.

Yet the Lord, in His mercy, was willing to give Nineveh a second chance. He would send Jonah, a prophet, to give them fair warning.

But Jonah had turned and fled from the Lord's presence. He didn't have the desire to go to Nineveh. Let God destroy them.

It wasn't His concern. And yet so many lives hung in the balance there. Would God allow Jonah to turn the other way to avoid the task that had been given him?

If we stop and we think what would have been, had God let Jonah be, how a whole city would have been destroyed, at the Lord's great mercy.

[ 9 : 06 ]     Though the city of Nineveh was desperately wicked, deserved punishment, God loved the people of Nineveh. They weren't the children of Israel, the Lord's chosen people, people group.

They were Gentiles, and in the Jews' mind, they were heathens. They were lost without hope. Yet God loved them.

He didn't have any desire to destroy them, but rather that their eyes would be opened to their wickedness, that they would repent and turn to Him, their Creator.

So can we see how God wouldn't allow Jonah to get away with disobeying Him? It wasn't enough to allow Jonah to drown in the sea.

Nineveh must be reached. Jonah must carry out his commission. And so, as we find in our text here, the Lord prepares a great fish to swallow Jonah.

[ 10 : 22 ]     So what do we know about sea life? We know that there are many kinds of fish in the sea. And what do fish eat? Mostly, it's other fish.

There's many small kinds of fish in the sea that would eat the plant life growing on the bottom. But generally, as the fish get bigger and bigger, the larger types of fish, they feed on the smaller fish.

And so here, at this point in the sea, there's a great fish near this boat. There's probably a whale of some sort.

And Jonah, well, to the whale, he is a smaller fish. So we know how that would end, right? The big fish would eat Jonah, who is the little fish, and that's the end of Jonah.

Except it isn't. There's a few things to note here. First is that God prepared this great fish to swallow Jonah.

[ 11 : 41 ]     You know, it wasn't pure coincidence that this fish happened to be in the right place at the right time as Jonah was thrown into the sea. This fish was there because God had created it.

He had a purpose for it. It was his desire to be there. God had full control of this fish. It pleased God to preserve Jonah's life.

And he had the power to use whatever means in doing so. Psalm 135, verse 6 reads, Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all the deep places.

God controls all things. Nothing is out of his control. It's interesting in the creation account, and let's turn there in Genesis chapter 1.

It's just an interesting thought there in Genesis 1, verse 21. As God creates the sea life and the birds, there is specific mention made of the size of sea creatures.

[ 13 : 04 ]     Let's read verse 21 of Genesis 1. So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves with which the waters abounded according to their kind and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. So it's just interesting that mention is made that God created great sea creatures as well as every other living thing that moves in the waters.

So just an interesting note, something to ponder, to think about. Is there maybe some kind of a connection with what we're reading in our text in Jonah?

In Genesis, it talks about God creating. It specifically mentions these great sea creatures. And again, here in Jonah, there is mention of a great fish, a great sea creature.

So an interesting connection. Going back to our text, so we know that God prepared this fish to be there.

[ 14 : 14 ] And then the second part of that thing to take note of is that God prepared the fish to swallow Jonah. Can anyone recall ever hearing of someone being eaten by a whale, being swallowed whole, and living to tell about it other than Jonah?

I've never heard of that happening. If you are eaten by something, whether a whale or maybe a lion, an animal on the land, it's the end of you.

If you are eaten, it's over. It's the nature of this world. And yet we have this instance here in Jonah, in our text, how Jonah is swallowed by this great fish, and yet he remains alive.

It says, for three days and three nights he is in the... And so, when God created these great sea creatures, whales as we would know them, he created them in two different ways.

Some whales have teeth and they eat by tearing with their teeth. And then there's other whales that just swallow their prey whole.

[ 15 : 40 ] Either way, the meal is consumed and it perishes. It doesn't survive. Jonah was swallowed and yet, though he was disobedient to his God, his God had compassion on him.

He is merciful to him and he protects him inside this fish's belly. Jonah's life is preserved inside this fish for three days and nights.

Jonah's God is our God. He commands obedience. He expected it of Jonah and he expects it of us as well. And the glory goes to him that he is so long-suffering and merciful.

He desired to show mercy to Nineveh. He showed mercy to the unbelieving sailors who cried out to their false gods to save them from the storm.

And when they realized that there was the true God who was able to save them, they feared him and sacrificed to him. Jonah was the sin aboard the ship that caused the great tempest and when punishment for disobedience was handed out, he was cast overboard to sink down into the sea.

[ 17 : 15 ] God showed his mercy in preserving Jonah's life in the sea and in the belly of the fish. When we are disobedient and we are, our merciful God is long-suffering toward us as well.

He doesn't give us what we deserve but rather is patient with us. He gently pleads with us to return to him into his favor and to reap the reward of blessings that he desires to shower on us.

There is punishment for disobedience. There must be. And yet, our Lord holds back the punishment that we deserve. We deserve death and separation from him for all eternity but he loves us and he longs for a relationship with us and therefore he is patient and gentle with us and he willingly forbears waiting for us to return to him.

And we've looked at chapter 1 of Jonah and already we've seen God's mercy toward mankind multiple times. His mercy abounds and it is new every morning.

There's one final thing in the last part of verse 17 that I want to look at and that is the mention of Jonah being in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. I touched on it just a bit the last time I spoke in chapter 1 here.

[ 18 : 58 ] Jonah is a type in this. His grave in the fish's belly was a foreshadowing of what Christ would endure and Jesus himself mentions this in Matthew chapter 12 verse 40.

Let's turn there and read that. So Matthew 12 verse 40. It reads this is the Lord speaking for 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.

You know the fish's belly was a new grave for Jonah in the same manner the tomb where Jesus was laid was a new tomb that no man had lain in before either and so the three days and the three nights that Jonah spent inside the fish's belly it signifies the length of time that our Lord would spend in the grave the heart of the earth and yet as the grave could not hold our Lord so too the fish Jonah at God's command and we'll touch into this more a little bit later in chapter two and so with that I want to move on into chapter two the first nine verses let's let's let's read verses one through three then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly and he said

I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice for you cast me into the deep into the heart of the seas and the floods surrounded me all your billows and your waves passed over me Jonah had fled the presence of the Lord aboard a ship he is awoken to a great tempest and he knows within himself that his sin is the cause of the storm threatening to destroy the ship and all who are aboard and when they realize there's no other choice the mariners cast Jonah overboard and now Jonah is thinking he's going to drown as he sinks into this water but before he can drown this great fish swallows him whole so what must have poor Jonah been thinking thoughts have been first he's thinking

I'm going to drown as he's sinking in the water and then I've become fish food either way things are not looking good for Jonah he'd never get out of this and it comes out in his cry to the Lord in his prayer do we also have days like Jonah did where things go from bad to worse and we can't see a way out what do we do when we're at our end when we don't know where to turn we pray right and pray is what Jonah does in the belly of the fish a thought here why do we wait until we come to the end of ourselves before we call out to God would it not be easier and even better if we would do that sooner it is glaring evidence of man's fallen state we like to cover up our wrongs to fix things before we are found in an effort to make ourselves look better you know we can fix this before others know about it but

[ 23 : 25 ] God knows us he knows our faults our wrongdoings he knows the things that we are trying to hide still we wait to pray to him until we realize that we can't fix these problems on our own this is where Jonah is at Jonah knows his guilt the affliction that he finds himself in is punishment for his wrongdoing he knows it he can no longer continue running from his God he's come to his end he knows the only way forward is to turn around and to return to the Lord to turn back to his God to repent of his ways to trust and obey his heavenly father and so he cries out to the Lord and he has confidence that the

Lord hears him and answers him he knows that he tried leaving God's presence but God never left him and he was only a prayer away bears his heart before the Lord we look again at the second part of verse 2 and verse 3 out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice for you cast me into the deep into the heart of the seas and the floods surrounded me all your billows and your waves passed over me and then continuing in verses 5 and 6 the waters surrounded me even to my soul the deep closed around me weeds were wrapped around my head I went down to the moorings of the mountains the earth with its bars closed behind me forever yet you have brought me up yet you have brought up my life from the pit oh

Lord my God you know he's describing the fear that he is feeling how of himself he knew this was the end the deep had closed around him he had left the earth its bars were closed to him he couldn't return to the earth he was out in the waters and he was in the fish's belly there was no way for him in his own strength to return to land this was he was at his end it is amid these dark distressing times Jonah's thoughts and for us as well it is where Jonah's thoughts our thoughts turn to God when we reach our end then we turn to the Lord God there is a ray of hope that shines through that darkness we see that in

Jonah's prayer and I know that we've seen it in our lives as well as we've come into those dark times and when we cry out to the Lord there are there is that glimpse that glimmer of hope a hope that is not there of ourselves but through God so in between these descriptions that Jonah gives where his fears are coming out he remembers who God is that he controls all things and though his life may be coming to an end it is his fault he cannot blame God if we look at verses 4 and 7 in Jonah's prayer then I said I have been cast out of your sight yet I will look again toward your holy temple and in verse 7 when my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord and my prayer went up to you into your holy temple though

Jonah believes his life is probably over yet he says he will look again toward heaven to God's holy temple and send his prayers up to his father while there is life time remains when life has passed it is too late and it's important for us to remember this as well while we have breath there is still time let us not wait until it is too late because with God all things are possible you know even for Nineveh the city on the verge of perishing experiencing God's wrath it was not yet too late there was still life still opportunity the souls of that city were still experiencing God's mercy though they did not know it all around us too there are souls who are separated from

[ 28 : 57 ] God yet they are still under his mercy unaware of the destruction that awaits them if God is calling us to witness to someone let us not be a Jonah obey the Lord's calling and let his favor rest upon you in Jonah's prayer there's a resemblance of Israel of the Old Testament as well we as we read through the Old Testament we look into the struggles of the nation of Israel they repeatedly fled from the Lord's presence they turned away from him and when they were at their lowest point like Jonah was here in our text when Israel was in exile they were captives of the nation then they remembered their

God and they cried out to them and he had mercy on them and he delivered them this cycle we see that repeating throughout the judges and as well in the time of the kings as well and so in the closing thoughts of Jonah's prayer in verses 8 and 9 he remembers the lost he's probably thinking of the mariners on the ship and maybe even the Ninevites who he is to reach out to as well verses 8 and 9 those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving I will pay what I have vowed salvation is of the Lord the mariners crying out in their fear had prayed to worthless false gods who were unable to save them

Jonah knows the foolishness of this that there is a true God who is able to save those who worship idols and pray to false gods forsake the mercy that is extended to them and unless they realize their error the mercy they receive will have been in vain how will they realize the error of their ways if someone does not tell them about the true God they ought to serve who is able to save we read Jonah's prayer we can see that in his words we know that Jonah has repented of his ways and come what may he has made the choice he will sacrifice to God with thanksgiving what he has vowed to the

Lord he will keep salvation is of the Lord and him alone Jonah has come to the realization that he must go to Nineveh he has vowed to do this he will serve the Lord come what may a change of heart here this is the attitude that we need to have as well God has a purpose for each one of us and it serves us well to heed the Lord's calling to obey his every command and to go where he sends us whether we fear or where we are to go let's remember who God is he is our creator our Lord and savior salvation is of the Lord and if he is on our side our soul is safe all praise and glory to him continuing on and looking to verse 10 of our text so the

Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land Jonah we as we read through his prayer in verses 2 through 9 we could tell through his words the confidence that he had that his prayer reached the Lord and we know it did we see that also in verse 10 God speaks to the fish and it vomits Jonah back onto dry land we can go back to the last verse of chapter 1 verse 17 where it says that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights and we know that God is something like this again here we see God's power over nature the control that he has over his creation he has but to speak to a creature and it does what he commands there is no resistance it humbly obeys unlike mankind creatures do not have a choice choice was given to mankind

[ 34 : 42 ] God desires our obedience to him but the choice to obey him to obey our creator is fully in our hands the difference between humans and animals God had created this great fish for a purpose it was there at the right time to swallow up Jonah at God's command to preserve his life and this great fish was symbolically Jonah's tomb for three days and three nights though Jonah wasn't dead he was removed from land where people live those days and nights he was buried alive in the fish's belly like the tomb in which Jesus was laid the fish could not hold

Jonah any longer than God would allow when Jonah's spirit was broken and he came in repentance before the very God that he was running from the fish had to give up Jonah at God's command and likewise the grave could not hold our Lord and Savior any longer than God would allow on the third day early in the morning the women discovered an empty tomb the tomb had to give up the Lord's body at the Father's command in both cases the tomb had to give up what it held though he hadn't physically died back to the land of living back to dry land for Jesus who had died he was raised from death to life everlasting death has lost its sting and victory is the

Lord's and so this verse 10 here in our text it is a clear reminder again of the God that we serve he is in control he is all powerful his will comes to pass and again as the central theme of the book of Jonah it speaks of the abundance of God's mercy toward those that he loves Jonah received mercy of the Lord and we too receive mercy from him God is patient with us though we fall short so often he hears our prayers he extends his abundant mercy to us giving us every opportunity to return to him with repentant hearts ready to obey and to do his will today we are living in a time of grace and yet we know as we as we study and we learn about eschatology and the book of revelation that the day comes where life as we know it ends where

God's mercy is cut off from those who refuse him till that day comes let us be found faithful sharing the gospel with the lost serving our Lord both day and night living in his will till we are called home to live with our creator forever more let's pray Lord God we come before you again this morning we come with thankful hearts we are thankful that your mercy is abundant that there is always more mercy to give that you are long suffering you are patient with us you are willing to give us more time to give us opportunity to correct our wrongs to return to you to find favor with you

Lord God we just praise and thank you for your grace for your mercy for your love toward us Lord we thank you for the book of Jonah that you have given it to us Lord it speaks of your mercy to mankind the mercy that you showed to the mariners to Jonah and as we will see in the coming chapters to the city of Nineveh as well and Lord as you gave out mercy those years ago Lord you are giving out mercy to us today as well we praise and thank you for your mercy for your goodness to us Lord I thank you for each one who came out this morning to hear your word Lord I pray that it would speak to us that it would grow our faith grow our trust and that we would leave here this morning vowing to live in obedience to you that come what may we would follow you we would do your will now we would not turn aside we would not stray now we would be found faithful serving you till you call us home lord i just ask that you go with us as we leave from here this morning pray that you would bless this day and just walk by our side through this life we just pray this in Jesus name amen