

# Jonah the Preacher

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Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

[ 0 : 01 ] Welcome to our services and as we come together around the Word of God in an act of worship, we seek that the Lord would be pleased to show us his favour and to bless his Word to us through his Holy Spirit.

Let us join together in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto Thee that we can draw near to Thee in an act of worship, acknowledging Thee as our God and as our Creator, Redeemer, through Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks that we can come with boldness and confidence into Thy presence, that Thou hast given to us the spirit of adoption, whereby we can draw near to Thee and cry to Thee, Abba, Father.

We give thanks, O Lord, that Thou art the God who is full of mercy and who delighteth in mercy, that Thou art a covenant God, that Thou art the God who has made provision for us through Thy Son, to enable us to come through His merits and to lay out petitions before Thee at this hour.

And we seek, O Lord, Thy blessing to be upon us, that Thy Spirit would enlighten our understanding in regard to Thy own Word, that it would lead us into Thy Word, and that it would take Thy Word and apply it to our hearts, that we would, O Lord, as those who have been redeemed by Thee, would walk worthy of the Gospel, that in our conversation and our walk daily, that we would be Christ-like, that indeed we would have that mindset of Christ in us through Thy Holy Spirit.

[ 2 : 36 ] O Lord, we give thanks for Thy Son, that He who condescended from the highest height imaginable into the lowest depths that was possible, in order to bring salvation to sinners like we are.

We give thanks as we reflected this morning, that He who was in the form of God took upon Himself the form of a slave and was made in the likeness of men and been found in fashion as a man that He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He took that curse that belonged to us, that He took what our sins deserved upon Himself in order to bring salvation to us.

We pray, O Lord, that as that movement in our land at the moment tried to erase the fact of slavery from history which cannot be erased, yet, O Lord, we know that spiritually that Thy Word demands of us that we forget not our slavery, that we forget not our bondage to sin, in order that we can appreciate and value the more the freedom that Thou hast given to us in Christ.

O Lord, we thank Thee that Thou art the one who has made us free from the bondage and the slavery of sin and has brought us into the liberty of Thy Son, into the liberty of the Gospel, that we are free people in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we have been redeemed from the bondage and slavery of sin.

And, Lord, grant to us that we would never forget that fact, that it would always be before our mind in order to humble us in appreciation of the freedom that Thou hast given to us through Thy Son.

[ 5 : 10 ] We ask, O Lord, that Thou would bless our homes and our families, that Thou would remember those who are homeless, those who are in poverty, that Thou would remember those who are lonely, those who have come to the end of their tether, those who see no meaning in life.

O Lord, we pray that Thou would break into their experience through Thy Holy Spirit, that Thou would show them that there is meaning in life to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

that that is the chief end for which Thou hath created us, that we would glorify Thee and enjoy Thee forever, that Thou would be the friend who would stick close to those who are lonely, that Thou would come alongside them, and that Thou would speak into their inner being, into their soul, even at this hour.

remember those who are poverty and homeless. O Lord, we pray that they would come to know the riches of Thy grace, that they would come to know the refuge that there is to be found in Christ.

We pray, O Lord, that Thou would relieve them in their physical poverty and homelessness, that Thou would bless those who care for them. and above all, we pray, O Lord, that our circumstances physically would lead us to consider our spiritual circumstance and our relationship with God.

[ 6 : 57 ] We pray, O Lord, that Thou would work among the careless and the indifferent through Thy Spirit and bring them to embrace Jesus Christ, stir them up in their hearts, bring revival into Thy church, we pray Thee, stir up Thy people, those whom Thou has redeemed for Thyself.

And we pray, O Lord, that Thou would remember those who are ill, remember those who mourn. Our situation and circumstances are so different, yet, O Lord, Thou knowest them all.

And Thou art the God of all grace, Thou art the God who is able to meet with every one of us at our specific point of need. And we pray, O Lord, that Thou would do so this night.

We pray, O Lord, that Thou would bless Thy Word as it is proclaimed throughout our nation and even into the ends of the earth and all Thy servants who have gone forth with Thy Word.

Be mindful of our needs, we pray Thee, as we come before Thee now in this act of worship. and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus' name and for His sake.

[ 8 : 12 ] Amen. We shall now read the Word of God as we find it in the Old Testament in the book of Jonah and chapter 3.

The book of Jonah and chapter 3. And the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go into Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I put thee.

So Jonah rose and went into Nineveh according to the Word of the Lord. Now, Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey.

And he cried and said, Get forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For the Word came unto the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne and he laid his robe from him and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything, let them not feed nor drink water.

[ 9 : 30 ] But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?

And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them and he did it not. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

Let us, let us return and seek God's blessing and help as we reflect on the first four verses that we have here in chapter three.

And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah rose and went into Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey and Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried and said, Yet forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown.

[ 10 : 46 ] This chapter opens with words that are similar to what we found at the beginning of the book. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, Arise, go into Nineveh, that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

Now, we know that the first time he received this commission that he was unwilling to obey it and so he fled to Joban. From there he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, the most distant seaport possible.

But God intervened with a great storm that threatened to destroy the ship and to save the ship the crew cried to their gods. But the storm only got worse and they came to at last to cast lots to find out who was responsible.

And the Lord fell upon Jonah and Jonah requested that they cast him into the sea. So the crew threw him overboard.

But instead of drowning he was swallowed by a great fish that God had sent. And in the belly of the great fish Jonah repented and called out to God and the Lord answered his prayer and Jonah knew that he was in the favour of God and the Lord made the fish to vomit Jonah on to dry land.

[ 12 : 08 ] Then God came to him the second time and he called him to the same task as he had originally commissioned him. Jonah had run away from God.

He willingly disobeyed the call of God and here we find the Lord coming the second time with a similar commission. We have already in our study Jonah emphasised the importance of the word of God and our response to it.

What we find here is that God did not leave Jonah. He did not turn his back upon Jonah despite Jonah's failure and disobedience. And here is a great example to us of the grace of God.

A great example to us of the graciousness of God. He comes to Jonah the second time with his word. He is not going to give Jonah up.

He is not going to wash his hands of Jonah but he comes a second time with the same words and the same call. He is going to use Jonah despite his failure.

[ 13 : 25 ] After all he had gone through in a storm and in the belly of the fish. God comes to him the second time with the same words and call.

It is all of grace that God bothers with us a second time after being disobedient the first time. Maybe you are listening today for the first time but for many you have been listening to the word of God many times.

Many times you have heard the gospel call repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And maybe like Jonah your response have been to go in the opposite direction.

However today the Lord has come again to you with the same words and the same call. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

salvation. And there is evidence there of the grace and the long suffering of God showing that the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

[ 14 : 37 ] He came to Jonah the second time. How many times has he come to you? Where would any of us be today who are rejoicing in the blessings of God if it were not for the grace and the long suffering of God that sent his word to us a second time?

Yes, maybe a third, fourth, fifth and many, many more times. How merciful God is to us. Now in the case of Jonah he was not an unbeliever.

He was a child of God in the service of God. A prophet of God who had prophesied in the past as we have noted. But one whose spiritual life had been on the decline.

Spiritually he was going in downward direction. And when the Lord called him to go and preach to the heathen city of Nineveh he disobeyed and ran away from serving God.

And only after a storm and been swallowed up by a great fish did Jonah repent and committed himself to the Lord in new obedience. Now Jonah may have thought that he had disqualified himself from being used by God because of his disobedience.

[ 16 : 03 ] He was saved and the Lord had restored him by his grace so that he was once again enjoying the favour of God. But because of his disobedience Jonah may have concluded that he was no longer fit to be a prophet.

That he had disqualified himself from being used by God in that manner again. We have a well known instance in the New Testament of someone who probably felt just like Jonah that he had been disqualified that he disqualified himself from service to the Lord and his name is Peter.

Peter who denied Christ three times. But on the very day of the resurrection the Lord Jesus appeared to Peter personally and although we are not told what was said between them I believe that the sole purpose of that meeting was to tell Peter, to show Peter that his sin was forgiven and that he was restored into the favour of the Lord.

Nevertheless there seems to be some hesitation on the part of Peter to return to the place where he was in serving the Lord and we find that as he was along with others at the Sea of Tiberias that Peter said I go up fishing and all the others joined with him.

Why did Peter suggest that they go fishing? Well I think there was more to it than the need to provide for their material needs. I think that Peter returned to his former occupation as a fisherman because he felt that he had disqualified himself from serving the Lord in that particular way of being within the inner circle of men who were called to be apostles of the Lord.

[ 17 : 56 ] He felt that he could no longer be as a spokesperson for the Lord Jesus Christ. that is why Jesus had to recommission him as we find in John's Gospel chapter 21.

Most of you will know what happened on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. For they came ashore we are told as soon then as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there and fish later on and bread.

We can imagine how this scene might have made Peter feel uneasy for he would have looked at the fire of coals and his mind would suddenly turn to another fire of coals that burnt outside the high priest's residence on the very night that Jesus was arrested and where he had denied his law three times.

And when Jesus turned and looked at Peter and at that look the unfaithful disciple went out and wept bitterly. And here we are at another fire of coals and Jesus looking at Peter once more asking three times whether he loved him.

One question for each of Peter's denial. In the end Peter could only answer by appealing to the Lord's omniscience. Lord thou knowest all things.

[ 19 : 16 ] Thou knowest that I love thee. Peter can only take solace in the fact that the Lord has a true knowledge of his heart. And dear friends how often that is true of me and you how often that the Lord's omniscience is the only solace that we can find.

That the Lord has a true knowledge of our hearts. In his grace and restoration Jesus did not say to Peter all is well Peter you are forgiven but of course I can never use you in the place of leadership again but instead Jesus publicly restored Peter with a threefold commission to shepherd and feed his flock.

You see this reminds us that sinners can not only be forgiven but they can also be restored. And that very fact is so hateful to Satan who might reluctantly admit that Christians can be forgiven their sins but the idea that they can ever again be useful in the service of the Lord he despises.

And so often he whispers into their ears that their sin has disqualified them forever of service to the Lord.

And the antidote to that lie is always the word of God. Now we must remember that repentance and restoration are always together.

[ 20 : 57 ] There can be no restoration into God's favour without repentance. And where there is repentance and God restores we are to recognise that.

And I think that was the reason why the Lord restored Peter on this occasion in a public way. There are many other examples that we have in the word of God of this principle of repentance and restoration but I want to return and focus upon Jonah.

The first time that Jonah was called by God we read but Jonah rose up to flee into Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But this time we read so Jonah rose and went into Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

You see Jonah is no longer disobedient to God's call but he is obedient to the call. This is what Hugh Martin says as a sinful man whose sin had been forgiven Jonah could not fail to accept at the hand of the Lord.

The mission now assigned him in a spirit of reverence and dutifulness of gratitude submission and obedience. Jonah would not only be prepared but desire us to be engaged again in his master's service.

[ 22 : 35 ] Why was Jonah more fit for God's mission now than that he knew himself as a sinner forgiven and as a person that had been restored into the favour of God?

Well notice the words given to Jonah in his first calling. Arise go to Nineveh that great city and cry against it for the wickedness has come before me.

But in his second calling there is a slight change which is a significant change. In the second calling he says arise go into Nineveh that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I put thee.

In the first instance he was to cry against it but in the second instance he was to preach the preaching that I put thee. Jonah was called to go to the same place and to do the same thing but the second time he was going to go with an attitude of grace.

He was going to preach the preaching that I put thee. earlier in our study we noted that when the call first came to Jonah that among the many reasons that Jonah came up with and why he went into the opposite direction could possibly have been that he thought that the Gentiles were outside the sphere of salvation that salvation was only for the Jews.

[ 24 : 11 ] But now in his second call after his own experience of the grace of God in restoration his gratitude for God's grace showed forth a new obedience.

Again if we may quote Hugh Martin he says that a true reception of the true forgiveness fills the soul in that very instant of a longing desire and a lawyer endeavour to obey.

In other words that Jonah had experienced the grace of God and he was now desirous of showing others the grace of God.

We have an instance of this when the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6 when he realised the depths of his sin and he cried out woe me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

But when he felt the angel pressing the live coal to his lips from the altar from the atoning altar and when he heard the angel saying lo this hath touched thy lips and thy iniquity is taken away and thy sin has been purged and when he says also I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send and who will go for us then said I here am I send me you know when we see the truth of our sin and receive the forgiveness for our sins through the grace of God and Jesus Christ we should have the same passion for the spread of the gospel and for the salvation of others probably Jonah could not fully understand why God was calling him to go to the Gentiles maybe deep down there was still a wee bit of reluctance especially the city of

[ 26 : 19 ] Nineveh which was so renowned for their wickedness when God himself at the beginning testified of their wickedness but Jonah had learned a lot since his first call he had learned about the grace of God he had learned to trust in God and whenever God's call come to us we are not asked to understand everything but we are asked to trust in God we are asked to lay aside any obstacles hindrances reluctance that may be on our part and to trust in God Hugh Martin again says Jonah was about to enter unprotected a city whose inhabitants were pre-eminently wicked and violent and he was to threaten them in the name of the Almighty with speedy and complete destruction it was as going into the lion's den nothing but an implicit reliance on the presence the faithfulness the power and the protection of

God could possibly bear him true in the calmness and courage befitting an ambassador of God nothing but an implicit reliance on the faithfulness and the power and protection of God could possibly bear him true and this is what I and you are asked to trust in God to trust in God to trust in his mercy and his salvation through Jesus Christ yes there are many things we cannot understand but we are to come to God and to trust in his faithfulness now what was the message that he was asked to bring to Nineveh yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown now we are not to understand that Jonah went through the city just shouting or repeating these words but what these words do is they encapsulate they capture his message yet forty days and

Nineveh shall be overthrown there was first of all a warning of God's judgment contained within these words the word overthrown is a strong word it means that Nineveh would be completely destroyed which actually happened to the city just over a hundred years after Jonah preached there between the time of Jonah's preaching and the Nineveh repentance the Lord sent the prophets of Nahum and Sephaniah to warn Nineveh of the impending destruction that was about to come upon them and which did come in 612 BC that year the whole city of Nineveh was destroyed despite Nineveh's great power the city just fell as Nahum had prophesied it was hidden and it wasn't until 1842 that modern archaeologists rediscovered its location in modern day

Iraq but the thing is this that we all need to hear this message the grace of the gospel probably begins with warnings of God's certain judgment on sin it is important in our preaching that we do not withhold the reality of God's judgment on sin we must have a clear message Lloyd Jones in his expression on the Sermon of the Mount he writes evangelism must start with the holiness of God the sinfulness of man the demands of the law the punishment meted out by the law and the eternal consequences of evil and wrongdoing it is only the man who is brought to see his guilt in this way who flies to Christ for deliverance and redemption there is always the danger that we withhold

God's judgment on sin from the people because it is not pleasant and it is not popular but when we turn to the gospel narratives we find often that Jesus spoke and warned the people of judgment for sin he spoke of hell fire he spoke of eternal destruction Jonah was preaching this message of judgment in the vilest wicked city of the known world at that time it was not easy it never is easy to bring such a message to a people but the truth must not be hidden the truth must be told God judges sin and the ultimate proof of that is of course the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we cannot understand fully the cross unless we accept that God judges sin here we have a message of judgment but also contained in these words is the message of grace and the gospel not only brings us that message of judgment but it brings us the message of grace yet forty days yet forty days and

[ 32 : 22 ] Nineveh shall be overthrown now the number forty is a well-known biblical number mentioned around a hundred and forty six times it is generally accepted that it represents a time of testing a time of trial a time of probation the reign of Noah's flood fell for forty days and Israel was tried for forty days when Moses met with God on the mountain and Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert for forty days and so on there are many references to this number in scripture and it is accepted that it represents a time of testing time of trial and time of probation and so that the message clearly indicates that the people of Nineveh are given time it speaks of a definite time established by

God before his coming in judgment they are given time to repent they are given time to respond to the preaching of Jonah or rather to God's message through Jonah this is something that we find throughout the Bible God gives time and his grace for people to repent Peter reminds us that the Lord is long suffering to us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and true preaching must contain all three of these elements judgment grace and repentance that was Jonah's message that was the message that God had given him to preach in the wicked city of Nineveh and that is still God's message to our wicked world God will judge sin but there is also the message of

God's grace and there is always the duty of repentance there is a sense in which Jonah himself would be a living sermon to them on the grace of God that brings life to the dead I do expect that Jonah would have told them of the way by which he came to preach to them he would have told them of his experience and how he was swallowed up by a great fish and was in the belly of the fish certain days until it vomited him out to dry land and that is interesting because there were many gods worshipped by the Ninevites but interestingly we are told by history that the people of Nineveh worshipped the fish goddess the daughter of air the goddess of fresh water the fish god represented as half man and half fish so we can imagine how

Jonah and his experience in the belly of the fish of the great fish would have left an impression upon the Ninevites and maybe left him more acceptable to them and because it is interesting that he came into one of the most wicked cities of the known world of the time and he preached such a sermon to them yet forty days and none shall be overthrown and maybe because of his experience in the belly of the great fish that this made him more acceptable to them and they would listen more attentively to the message that he was bringing before them or as a man that had been forgiven but as a man that had been restored but

Jonah's message is for us tonight yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown in other words we find ourselves in this definite time that has been established by God where in his grace he calls us to repentance before he comes to judge but how are you going to respond to the call in the new testament Jesus said the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold a greater than Jonah is here you see we know far more than the people of Nineveh therefore greater is our responsibility and accountability to God to repent and believe or else to face the consequences but notice that the warning that

[ 37 : 39 ] God gave to the people of Nineveh presupposes hope the very fact that God should send a prophet with a message like that meant there was hope and the very fact that God has given you a message today means that there is hope and wherever the gospel is being proclaimed tonight there is hope wherever the servants of the Lord are sent tonight to preach the gospel there is hope yet forty days an enemy shall be overthrown but there was still hope and we shall see that as in our next study I hope that the response of the

Ninevites will be considered by us and the example that they are to all those to whom the gospel comes with this command repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation well here then is Jonah and he is obedient now to the call of God to go and preach to the people of Nineveh a prophet who sinned against God but who repented and who was restored back into favour with God and commissioned the second time to go and preach to the people of

Nineveh in spite of the fact that he himself might have thought that he had disqualified himself from serving God yet the very opposite is true in fact he was now a much better prepared man to go and to preach the gospel in Nineveh that is not saying that or give any praise or glory to his disobedience but it shows us how God in his sovereign grace can bring good out of evil that only belongs to God who can bring good out of our disobedience who can make us stronger men stronger women in our faith and in our service to him and only God can do that that doesn't give any glory or praise to our disobedience it gives glory and praise to

God who can sovereignly work out good from our evil and from our disobedience but that is completely in the hands of God yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown and the Ninevites was called to respond to that message and tonight you are called to respond to the message of the gospel that is presented to you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we acknowledge thine own sovereignty over us as we come to confess O Lord our waywardness and we confess O Lord that we are so disobedient that we at times do not do that which thy word proclaims that we ought to do but

O Lord we give thanks that thou art a compassionate God a God that is full of grace and a God that is full of mercy and if we repent of our sin that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and to restore us by thy grace and to thy favour and to use us again in the service of God O Lord we pray that thou would bless thy word to us that thou would meet with each one of us at our point of need that thou would continue with us during the coming days and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen