

# God's Sovereign Mercy

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord our God, we thank you once more for the privilege we have of gathering together on this evening.

We thank you, Lord, for the sense of fellowship and the sense of togetherness we have as we come and worship your name. We give you praise for this gathering. Help us to have our minds and our hearts focused even for a short time together this evening.

Focused on what it is we're doing here. Focused on you. The God we seek to worship in spirit and in truth even this very evening. The God who we know is here with us this very moment.

Your presence is here amongst us. Not because of a building and not because of our own merit. But your presence is here because your word assures and reassures us that you have made your home with your people.

And where your people are and where your people worship you. That there you are present. That there you make yourself at home amidst your people. Lord, help us to understand the beauty and the glory of that reality.

[ 1 : 1 3 ] That through all the days of our lives, in our times at home, our time of work, our time of leisure, and in the dark days of life, and the hard days of life.

That we have a God who does not leave us. A God who does not forsake us. As we worship your holy, great, lifted up name. As we worship the sovereign name of our sovereign God.

Of him who has all the power and glory. We also come just now and we confess that we often find ourselves so liable to forget that you are the God.

Yes, who is glorious and mighty and exalted in all your ways. But also you are the God who tells us so carefully and so gently in your word. And you are the God who wipes away the tears of your people.

You are the God who, even as your word puts it, who bottles up the tears of your people. Who bottles up these tears. The God who cares for the small things, even if our lives.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] The God who has numbered the hairs on the head of your people. The God who knows your people. The God who is close to all who cry out to you. Help us never to lose sight of that reality.

That we worship a God who cares for us and who knows us. And one who has known us from before time itself. A God who, before creation, that you knew us.

That you had your perfect plan worked out for us. A plan that would glorify you. A plan for the good of your people. Help us in days of hard times and in days of dark times.

To trust in that plan. That we trust in a God who knows the end from the beginning. And the beginning from the end. With that in mind, we do again bring before you just now those who are suffering.

Those who are suffering pain physically and mentally. Those perhaps even suffering spiritually this evening. Those who are going through trials and situations.

- [ 3 : 17 ]     That perhaps no one else knows about. Who in the privacy of their own homes. Of the privacy perhaps even of their own hearts. Who must suffer and who suffer through situations. That the rest of us can't even begin to work through.
- We bring these people before you. Even those here this evening. Who have found themselves just now in a dark time. Or we ask you to be with them. You bless them. We ask Lord for those here this evening.
- Those here of us who know you and who love you. Lord help us to be encouraged by your word. We ask you to open up your word to us. As we find ourselves again following the account of the prophet who ran away from your sight.
- Who ran away from your face. Lord help us not to shake our heads from a distance. But help us to confess that in Jonah we see so much of ourselves. At times we find ourselves so unwilling.
- But just as we see ourselves in Jonah. We also see your goodness towards him. That you are a merciful God. A long suffering God. A God who does good towards his people.
- [ 4 : 24 ]     A God who is merciful towards his people. A God who keeps and who cares for his people. A God who cares for his people. I pray just now for those who are heavy in our minds. Those who are our loved ones.
- Those who we love so much and who we care for so deeply. Those who are our family members and our friends. Those in this community across the island. And perhaps even across the nation and the world this evening.
- Those who come to mind just now as we think of those who have no idea of the glory and the beauty of who Jesus is. Those who have no idea as to the danger they are in.
- The danger they are in not knowing Jesus for themselves. Those who have no care. No concern for their souls. Those we have prayed for for many years.
- Some here who have prayed for these dear people close to our hearts. Perhaps even for decades. Family members. Parents and children.
- [ 5 : 23 ]     Siblings. Those who are so close to us. And those who as of yet have shown no gospel interest. Lord we ask you use us as witnesses.
- Help us in our conduct both private and public. To declare and to show that we are those who know Jesus. Who despite our faults and failings. Many though they be.
- But we have a great saviour. Who has cleansed us. And who calls us his own. Help us everything we do and say. To be a signpost. To point those around us to our glorious saviour.
- Help that we ask Lord that no one would be put off from the gospel. Because of our conduct. Or because of our own words. Lord that we would not. Lord in our actions. In our words.
- Even in our thoughts. We would seek to honour you at all times. We pray Lord for those. Who are here this evening. Who perhaps as of yet. Cannot say that.
- [ 6 : 20 ]     They know Jesus. That they love Jesus. We thank you for them. We ask that you bless them. We ask that this evening. You bless them. By opening up your word to them. Perhaps the first time. As they sat under many.
- Many years. Of gospel preaching. This evening. That you open up their ears. And they hear for the first time. Truly hear for the first time. That the gospel of hope.
- Is a gospel for them. The gospel of repentance. And righteousness. A gospel that gives life to those. Who cry out for it. That offer is for them. And the gospel that promises.
- A life better than our saviour. A life never ending. That gospel is for them. We know Lord that it's a work of your spirit. It's your spirit alone. That he alone opens.

And changes hearts of stone. To hearts of flesh. We ask for that. Heart changing work. To be seen. Even this congregation. Tonight. And the weeks ahead. And we come just now Lord.

[ 7 : 17 ] And we pray for something. We know is beyond our power. We pray for something. That is beyond our understanding. And beyond our ability. We pray Lord. We would see days of renewal.

And days of refreshing. Days of gospel revival. In this district. And in this area. Not for the glory of. Of this ministry. Not for the glory of this congregation.

Not for the glory of this denomination. But for your namesake. For your glory. We would see this building. And their building next door. Filled with men and women. Boys and girls.

Seeking after a saviour. Calling out to him. And finding in him. All that they need. Lord we ask that for this community. We ask we would see these days of gospel hope.

We would see these days of renewal. Lord we know that as we ask these things. We perhaps find ourselves doubting the possibility of it. But we give you praise that. That these things are impossible to you.

[ 8 : 16 ] You have worked in power in many ways. And at many times. We ask Lord until these days come. These days of revival. These days of renewal. Help us we ask to serve you faithfully.

In the day of small things we find ourselves in. Help us to be faithful. In the small thing you've given us. Help us to be faithful. And to be dutiful. In the tasks you've given us. Help us to pray for this place.

To pray for ourselves as a congregation. Help us to pray for those around us. To come to know you. Help us to pray for the gospel work. Across the world this evening.

Gospel work that brings in so many. The gospel work that takes in dear brothers and sisters. With different cultures and different languages. Across this world.

That we are just a small part of your global church. We give you praise for that. Lord that you are the God. Who brings in people. From all walks of life. Across all the man-made boundaries.

[ 9 : 13 ] That these things are no boundary to the gospel. We do pray just now again. For those who are persecuted. Brothers and sisters. Who at this moment are facing real danger. Brothers and sisters.

Who we know by name. Who at this moment are in prison. Who are waiting to hear. Trial details. Who are waiting to hear their fate.

Whether they face many more years in prison. Or at times where they may face even a worse fate. Those who are willing to die. For the sake of the gospel. Lord give us wisdom to remember them.

Lord give us that sense of urgency. To pray for these dear brothers. And these dear sisters. Who seek to even lay their life. On the line for the sake of the gospel. Help us not to forget them.

And give us the wisdom we ask. That whilst you give us freedom in our own country. To make the most of that freedom. Whilst we are freely able to share the gospel. Lord you give us wisdom.

[ 10 : 12 ] To seek out every opportunity to do so. Whilst the day. The Lord is with us. We pray again Lord. For those over us. We ask. That we would see a return in our nation. To days of belief.

Lord we confess that. These days of a nation. Of days of belief. That they were few and far between. Even in years gone by. Lord that we exist in a reality. Where there is no real holy nation.

Lord we look for that day coming. That day soon. The new heavens and the new earth. Who will be one holy people. Without sin. Without blemish.

Without fear. Life forever in your presence. Until the day comes. Help us to serve you well. Forgive us the sins. We have even committed this afternoon. Sins against your holy nature.

Against your holy person. And help us. We ask this evening. To remember that we are here. Because of the finished work of another. Because of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in him we can rest this evening.

[ 11 : 13 ] In him we can find all our hope. All our peace. And all our joy. Ask all these things in and through. And for his precious name's sake. Amen. Let's again sing to God's praise.

Again from the Scottish Psalter. And from Psalm 67. Psalm 67. First version of the Psalm.

Psalm 67. Scottish Psalter. And the first version of the Psalm. It's on page 300. Of the Psalm books. Psalm 67. On page 300.

This Psalm of course. We know so well. A Psalm of. Crying out for forgiveness. From the Lord. To the God who is merciful. Lord bless and pity us. Shine on us with thy face.

That the earth thy way. And nations all. May know thy saving grace. Let people praise thee Lord. Let people all thee praise. Let the nations be glad.

[ 12 : 15 ] In songs their voices raise. Psalm 67. The first version of the whole Psalm. To God's praise. Lord bless and pity us.

Shine on us with thy face. Let people praise thee Lord.

Let people praise thee Lord.

Let people all thee praise. O let the nations be glad.

In songs their voices raise. Thy hope together.

[ 13 : 24 ] That Jesus. Mig ■■■■■■ than. Por- joshu Let's turn to the book of Jonah.

To kind of study and read God's word, the book of Jonah. A very short reading this evening, but a reading that contains so much for us, I'll see later on.

Jonah chapter 3. It's on page 727 of the church Bibles. It's such a small book, often it's hard to stop at properly. It's page 727.

Jonah chapter 3. Let's hear the word of God. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. The Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey.

[ 15 : 21 ] And he called out, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

The word reached the king of Nineveh. And he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he issued a proclamation, and published through Nineveh, By the decree of the king and his nobles. Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

Who knows? God may turn and relent, and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

[ 16 : 36 ] Give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word. Let's sing once more to the Lord's praise. This time from Sing Psalms.

Sing Psalms and Psalm 96. Sing Psalms and Psalm 96.

We can sing verses 1 down to verse 8 of the Psalm. It's on page 1, 2, 6. Psalm 96a, verses 1.

Down to verse 8 of the Psalm. We'll sing a new song to the Lord. Sing praises to his name, and his salvation day by day, that all the earth proclaim.

His glory and his mighty deeds to every land declare. How great and awesome is the Lord, with him no gods compare. Let's sing these verses to God's praise. O sing and new song to the Lord.

[ 17 : 49 ] Sing praises to his name, and his salvation day by day, and his glory and his mighty deeds to every land.

Him. He's glory and his glory and his mighty deeds to every land.

He's glory and his mighty deeds to every land. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 19 : 41 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Jonah chapter 3. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. of a prophet. We saw the first week, we saw the depths to which Jonah, the lengths really that Jonah went to, to avoid doing his job, to avoid doing of course what the Lord called him to do and we saw that again and again as much as Jonah rebelled against God God, even in Jonah's rebellion, God still didn't let Jonah go. In two senses, he didn't let Jonah go in one sense and that Jonah was still going to do the job God had called Jonah to do. But in a second sense even though Jonah is in constant and in deep and severe rebellion against God, God has not forgotten or given up of course on Jonah. And last time we saw in chapter 2 the prayer of Jonah, he's been rescued and we saw the prayer. We saw the reality that even as

[ 21 : 31 ] Christians, we find ourselves in times where life is difficult, where life is hard, where we are at an end of ourselves, where there's nothing we can do to help ourselves and even these dark days and these hard days, that God is good. God is always good.

Here we find ourselves here of course in chapter 3 and tonight we see really that God is a God of mercy. We said that each week that there's a theme is there beneath the surface that God is a merciful God. After all, this whole book is about God showing mercy to a city, to a people who deserved no mercy. An evil people, an awful people, but God shows them mercy.

That's next week's details really. But for this evening, just focusing on chapter 3 for our short time together, from the back of our minds, that constant fact that God is a God of mercy. So we've had in mind just two very simple and very broad headings, you could say, two points for us this evening. First of all, we see a second chance for Jonah.

A second chance for Jonah. And secondly, of course, a second chance for Nineveh. So a second chance for Jonah and a second chance for Nineveh.

First of all, looking at verses 1 down to verse 4 or verse 5 really, we see a second chance for Jonah. What takes place in this poor man's life when he gets a second go?

- [ 23 : 11 ] How is God merciful? How is God good to this man? We'll see that in detail just now. Verse 1 and verse 2. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.

First of all, the call to Jonah, it's repeated, isn't it? The call is repeated in verses 1 and verse 2. And here from the very start, we see the mercy of God being shown towards Jonah.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. Which we read in chapter 1, the first word, the first verse of chapter 1. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, And for all the rebellion and backsliding and just absolute mess of a situation Jonah has caused for himself, here we see Jonah's second chance beginning.

The word of the Lord, the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the second time, saying, There is mercy here from the Lord, even in the direct wording of the call.

Even in the direct repetition of the call, we see the mercy of God to this runaway, and on paper, this failure of a prophet. God doesn't, after Jonah is spat back on dry land in verse 10, God doesn't say to Jonah, doesn't come to him in wrath and say, Jonah, son of Amittai, since you have made such a mess of things and destroyed your chances, I won't use you again.

- [ 24 : 59 ] You've shown yourself to be a useless prophet, a pointless prophet, a runaway prophet, therefore you've missed your chance. Do we see that?

Anything like that? Of course not. When God calls Jonah again to serve him, God is not angering his call. The call is not frustrated.

With respect, it's not, as it were, passive-aggressive. It's a simple call. The call hasn't changed. In fact, the call we see in chapter 3, compared to the first call in chapter 1, it's actually more personal.

In chapter 1, we see that the Lord addresses Jonah with his full family name. Addressed to Jonah, the son of Amittai. Now, you could argue, and some do, there's two sides in this.

We either say that it's just Jonah being introduced to us, others say that it's how the Lord addressed Jonah. We don't really know. But here we see the call is simply just, arise.

- [ 26 : 01 ] Jonah, arise. Get up. Go to Nineveh. That great city. And so on. And so on. The only evidence we have that this is God giving Jonah his second chance, that God is being merciful to Jonah, is that short wee word, again.

The second time. And literally, it's just one word in Hebrew, as far as we can see. It's just one word. It's again. The call came to Jonah, again, saying.

That's it. Apart from that one wee word, again, God gives the same call to Jonah. Despite all the chaos he has caused, despite almost sinking a ship full of, at least humanly speaking, innocent people, despite going for miles and miles, and as far as we know, for a good time in the wrong direction, God just starts again with poor Jonah.

Brothers and sisters, as we've said all along, we might shake our head at Jonah and think, oh man, what a mess. What a mess.

If God gave us that duty, I certainly wouldn't mess up as bad as he did. I certainly wouldn't go this way when God says go that way. And I hope by now, yourself and myself with you, that we've all realised together that we do.

- [ 27 : 31 ] That Jonah might have had quite a specific and quite a spectacular mistake take place in his life, but the mindset and the attitude of Jonah, it's found in all of us as believers.

God says do one thing, and to our shame, and to our great shame, quite willingly, we often do the other thing. The question here in chapter three is, as we see the call of God come again to Jonah, the question for us is, as Christians here this evening, those of us who know the Lord and who love the Lord, how do you think, dear brother, dear sister, this is just to the Christians, how do you think God views you?

In light of your mess ups, in light of your catastrophes perhaps, in light of you just making a complete boot up of everything, how does God view you?

Does he see you in light of his failures? Does he think, well, I gave Donald this job and that job and this job and that job and he has failed me there, tick, failed, well, cross I guess, failed me there, cross, failed me there, cross.

If we're honest, sometimes as Christians, when we do find ourselves messing things up, we do find ourselves doing and saying things we wish we didn't say and do, we do worry and we kind of slip away from what we know about God and we start thinking of God once more as, as it were, wrathful judge hanging over us.

[ 29 : 13 ] God is judge to those who as of yet don't know him. But for the Christians here, for the believers here, what do we see from the Lord?

What did Jonah see from the Lord? Mercy. Long-suffering mercy. What does the Lord show and give towards us when we seem to mess things up again and again?

When you find yourself in that place of, of sin perhaps again? That place of, backsliding again? What does the Lord give his people?

Yes, he often chastises us, but why does he chastise us? He treats us with what? With mercy. Again and again.

Overflowing, beyond understanding levels of mercy. Now, perhaps the, the world might say, well, if you're saying that Christians get a, a free pass, they can sin and then say sorry and it's all good.

[ 30 : 20 ] That, does that not mean then that Christians can just do whatever they want and mess up whenever they want and just go off the rails whenever they want and everything's okay? Well, the Christians here will tell you that those of us who know and who love the Lord, and yes, we will mess things up and so on and so on and so on.

But we hate it. We hate it. And it grieves us. And when we see and catch ourselves in our sin again, we catch ourselves rebelling against the Lord again, we catch ourselves like Jonah going the opposite way again, like Jonah in chapter two, we come back to the Lord.

Come back to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, the Lord looks on his people in love. That's not just a warm hug for a Sunday evening.

That's the gospel truth. The Lord looks on Jonah. I looked on Jonah in mercy. He looks on you and I, dear brother, dear sister, in mercy because of the finished work of our Savior.

And we degrade, not on purpose, but still, we degrade and devalue the finished work of our Savior when we think that somehow our mistakes and somehow even our time backsliding, that somehow what we have done wrong triumphs over the finished, perfect work of Jesus.

[ 31 : 41 ] Now, it sounds holy, perhaps, and it feels holy. You say, oh, well, I know I love the Lord. I know I'm his, but I feel too bad and I feel too dark to go near him for just now.

It sounds good, but it's just not right, is it? Christ has purchased you with a precious, precious price to your brother, dear sister.

And for every time you and I go into ourselves, rather than go back to him when we find ourselves messing up, when we find ourselves sinning, when we find ourselves backsliding, and so on, and so on, and so on, whatever your situation might well be, every time we say, I'm too dark to go to the Lord, I'm too far away to go back to him, we're devaluing the eternal work of our glorious Saviour.

He is sufficient. His mercy is sufficient. His finished work is sufficient, and more than sufficient, we could say, with respect, to deal with your sins, to deal with your backsliding, X, Y, Z, whatever your problem might be, he can deal with it.

Jonah had his sins dealt with. The Lord, and his mercy, starts again. Just starts again.

[ 33 : 01 ] As God recalls Jonah, literally, as God gives the call again to Jonah, this also is the reaffirming of two things.

It's the reaffirming of Jonah's position as a prophet. God is still using this man to do his will, to carry out his purposes. It's also a reaffirming of Jonah's place before the Lord.

But the Lord still cares for Jonah, despite the disaster he's made of things. As we come back to the Lord, and we know mercy and forgiveness from the Lord, as the Lord speaks to us tenderly and kindly as he does to us in Scripture, reaffirms for us our place before the Lord.

Yes, we might have done X and Y and Z, and yes, we are bitterly sorry and repentant for these things. And yes, these sins and these backslidings and situations might have caused us so much grief.

The Lord reaffirms again and again that for those who are his, he holds on to you, he holds on to me, he keeps us. But more than that, he also reaffirms that the Lord will still use us.

[ 34 : 20 ] He still has a duty for us as Christians in his mission field, in our homes, in our villages, in this place. Brothers and sisters, this evening, again, I'm getting to know you all a bit more, but I keep saying this, God willing, if I'm here for years, I'll still say the same thing.

I don't know you. I don't know you. I'll know your stories, I'll know your life more and more, I hope to get to know you personally more and more, but I will never truly know you.

We all know that to be true. We all, in our own minds, know ourselves, the things we hide from others, the thoughts we have that we never share with others, and so on and so on.

And if you're here this evening, and publicly, you're a Christian and you are and you love the Lord and you know the Lord, but in your heart of hearts, you think, I have failed the Lord.

If you feel like a failed servant of the Lord, these first few verses of chapter three, it's there to give you hope and real hope.

[ 35 : 26 ] God uses even those who have failed him before, because really, that takes in every single Christian, every single Christian, if you speak to the most, if you found, for a start, if you found tonight amongst us here, the most secure Christian, the one who's most secure in our faith, who feels strongest, not who feels, but who is strongest in our faith, the Christian here who is walking closest to the Lord, I can almost guarantee you, almost guarantee that Christian, that they will think of themselves as just a failure, probably, as someone who is so small and so low in the kingdom of God.

You think, well, you're not. You serve the Lord, you've glorified the Lord and everything else. Every Christian, in one sense, is a story of continual failure to serve the Lord.

But every Christian is also a story of the Lord's never-ending, never-ending mercy towards us as he uses us, failures we might well be, as he uses us again and again to accomplish his perfect plans, as he shows us his never-ending love again and again, his care again and again.



Dear River, dear sister, you might well be, you might well be, you might be right, you might well be, in one sense, a failed servant this evening. But like Jonah, the Lord comes again and says, arise, arise and serve me once more.

Arise and serve me once more. The call goes back to Jonah once more, but of course, then the call is respected.

[ 37 : 17 ] So Jonah, in verse 3, rose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now he's listening, now he's finally listening, he goes according to the word of the Lord. Nineveh was exceedingly a great city, three days, journey and breadth, and so on.

Jonah has learned his lesson. Jonah has finally learned his lesson. It's taken quite a lot of trauma, quite a lot of pain and worry for poor Jonah, but finally, the Lord has spoken, Jonah listens, and Jonah goes.

As God gives the second chance to Jonah, Jonah then makes full use of that, as it were, second chance to then serve the Lord.

And here's the other side of the coin. Yes, God is eternally merciful, and we know that. We praise him for that. Yes, he is steadfast in his love and steadfast in that mercy that's connected to his love.

We believe that, we preach that, we affirm that, we love that. But when God shows mercy to us, we must be like Jonah and not, as it were, take advantage of that mercy.

[ 38 : 29 ] Jonah doesn't just sit back and say, well, the Lord is merciful. I'm happy then to ignore him one more time and see what happens then. No. Jonah knows the Lord's been merciful towards him.

He knows God's been good to him. So when Jonah sees and realizes that God still has him, God still cares for him, God is still merciful towards him, the second God then gives this instruction once more for Jonah to go and do his job, Jonah does it.

Jonah arises, he gets up, and he goes to Nineveh. When God shows us mercy, we must be very careful and very mindful, as it were, not to, not that we can, but humanly speaking, not to take advantage of that mercy the Lord is giving us.

Not to presume his mercy. Yes, he is merciful. Yes, he is abounding and everlasting mercy. But as Christians, as we live our lives, when we see and receive the mercy from the Lord, let's be like Jonah.

That mercy comes in our life once more. When we see God restoring us once more, let's respond by serving him with a renewed sense of joy, a renewed sense of vigour, as a reminder that God is a God who is merciful, who cares for his people.

[ 39 : 56 ] So the call is respected. Jonah does the job finally, he's been called to do. That then leads to Jonah proclaiming, proclaiming the gospel call he has supposed to have proclaimed in the first place.

Verse 4, Jonah began to go into the city going a day's journey and he called out yet forty days and then ever shall be overthrown.

Just one quick word and perhaps a discussion for another time but there's some discussion, plenty of discussion really and it's deep and it's technical but it boils down to verses 3 and verse 4 as to the size of Nineveh at the end of verse 3.

Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, three days journey and breadth. Well, some argue that, well, it just wasn't that big.

No city of his time was three days walking and breadth. It just wasn't a reality and some will make much of that reality. Some will make much of that discussion and the reality is the word of the Lord is clear and no word is wasted.

[ 41 : 12 ] What is this telling us? It's telling us that Jonah, as it were, preached the word to the city and to the city limits. Like ourselves today, and this might get me in trouble, if I was to say, well, I had this problem next door to yourselves here when I was in back, I called everything back when I was in back and the folks in Tongue didn't quite enjoy that.

Even the folks in Greece had problems me calling everything back. The reality is we use terms generally and here we see Nineveh being used. It tells us that the word was preached to the city, the centre city but also to the surrounding areas.

At this time we know from outside of scripture that if you lived in a wee village close to a big city you identified as being in that big city. Of course you did. It happens today.

How many villages and towns around Glasgow just say they're from Glasgow? It's what we do today. It's what we did then. If you look online and you see the commentaries and if you read anything on Jonah of those who oppose it, apart from the whale, we dealt with that before, apart from the whale they spend so much time and so much energy fussing about no city is three days big of walking time.

They lose sight of what's being said. This is not a geographical tour of Nineveh. This is telling us that every inhabitant, effectively the whole area of Nineveh, that they heard the gospel.

[ 42 : 44 ] This is not giving us a tour. This is telling us as to the extent of the mercy of God. So the call is proclaimed and the call is proclaimed by this runaway prophet.

This prophet has gone from fear. He was terrified of going near Nineveh, terrified of going anywhere near them in the first chapter, so much so we saw what he did.

But here, this man who was so scared of these evil people and evil they were, he goes to them. And to this evil people, he proclaims an honest and to be fair, a blunt message from the Lord.

Forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. God will accomplish his plans.

As this runaway failure of a prophet finally preaches, finally shares the message he's been sent to share, God's plan is being accomplished step by step by step.

[ 44 : 03 ] As we come to the end of this look at Jonah himself, we're reminded that God, quite simply, God uses failures. God uses failures.

failures. We see that again and again throughout the whole scripture. God uses the ones and the people the world would never look at again.

I gave the kids homework this morning, but here's your homework. If you can find, find more than a handful, even a handful of men and women in scripture that God used gloriously, who weren't in some form of sin, some form of a mess, who didn't then make a mess of things out before, during, or afterwards.

God uses failures. God uses us. God uses sinners to accomplish his perfect will, his perfect plan. That is beyond our understanding.

We think, well, how is that? Why is that? God is merciful. God uses the foolish to astound kings. God uses the small to bring the gospel to the mighty.

[ 45 : 18 ] And here we see that played out. God used a failure of a prophet to bring the gospel to a people who are perishing, to bring repentance and good news to a people who needed that good news.

I can't be a missionary in my own home, my own village. I can't be salt and light to this place. I can't go and tell anyone in North Tulsa the gospel because my own life is such a disaster.

I've let him down so many times and no one knows, no one knows, but in my own mind, in my own heart, I know I am no good Christian. I know I am a disaster of a Christian.

I know I'm a poor excuse of a Christian. Christian. And you might well be right and you probably are right in one sense. But take all that and come back to this chapter and see the reality that God calls you his.

He calls you his own. He gives you and shows you and I mercy. And he tells you and I to what? Arise and go to Nineveh. Arise and go back to your homes.

[ 46 : 34 ] Arise and go and serve him in your homes, in your workplaces, in this area, in this village. God uses failures because God saves failures.

And God gives hope and life to failures. And God makes failures into his own sons, his own daughters. Don't for a second think that there's anyone, anyone, any Christian here this evening who has somehow not failed the Lord in various ways and many times.

If we're honest, we can all say, that's not me. That is me. I have failed him. I have made a mess of things. So on and so on. The Lord uses failures.

The Lord saves failures. And like Jonah, the Lord uses failures often to do great things. What's the response of this town? I think this is very briefly to our second point.

God shows mercy to Jonah, but also then God shows mercy, does he not, to Nineveh. We see that from verses five down to the end of verse ten. A second chance for Nineveh.

[ 47 : 50 ] As the gospel, as the good news, as the news of repentance goes out from Jonah in verse four, what's the immediate reaction? In verse five, we see this instant response.

Verse five, and the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them. They believed God, full stop.

These are evil people, pagan people, people who on a different day might have killed Jonah, potentially horribly killed him for sharing this stupid message to him.

How dare you come to this place, you Hebrew, you Israelite, how dare you come here and tell us, tell us we're going to die. But no, the Lord is in it.

Because the Lord is in it, because Jonah is going in the strength of the Lord this time, not in his own strength, because he's going in the strength of the Lord, there's an instant reaction. They believe the gospel, they believe the warning from Jonah.

[ 48 : 56 ] They put on sackcloth and ashes, that, of course, representation of mourning. Sackcloth and ashes is what they'd wear to show their penance, you could say, to show their sadness towards their own sin.

That sackcloth, that itchy clothing, made to be itchy. Burlap, I guess, is the word we might use for it, to show just how sorry you are and cover yourself in ashes and to show as much as you can, that inwardly you are so, so penitent, you're so regretful, perhaps, sorry, perhaps, repentant for what you have done.

An immediate reaction. In the face of the honest and clear warning from Jonah, the people repent. They actually listen.

they repent. Well, they listen first. They listen, they believe, then they repent.

They waste no time in responding to Jonah. And the truth is, the gospel requires an immediate response. We said this this morning, providentially this morning, we said the same thing.

[ 50 : 13 ] The gospel requires an immediate response. And it's only by the Lord's mercy, that if you've not yet responded to the gospel call, that you're still hearing it this evening.

The Lord's mercy that we are here under grace this evening, hearing once more of a gospel call go out, hearing once more of a gospel being shared and the word being preached. It's only from the mercy of God that we're here this evening, because the gospel requires an immediate response.

Immediate response. I'll say it one more time. I'll say it before, but I'll keep saying it. It's for Christians, but it's also for those who as of yet aren't believers.

Is it not true that you become so comfortable, all of us, so comfortable, coming to this place twice a Lord's day perhaps, coming out to the services, and praise the Lord, we're so thankful you're here, we're so glad you're here, but you come here, it's just part of your weekly pattern, you come and do your hour and go home, and yet, every week, every week, every week, every month, every year, passes you by, and yet you've done nothing to respond to the gospel, nothing.

Then I had 40 days, 40 days, I say this very carefully with respect, but I know it will be true, there's some here and you've had almost 40 years, almost 40 years of gospel preaching has passed by your ears, and yet you have not listened to it.

[ 51 : 57 ] And I know it's good for us perhaps when a new ministry starts, a new season starts, but the truth is there is nothing I can do for you, there is nothing I can say to you than the gospel.

A new ministry, a new minister even, I can't save you. If I could, I would, if any of us could, we would, but you must come to Jesus yourself.

Yet 40 days, and then that will be destroyed. They had 40 days, and these people knew the end was coming, and they had the sense to listen to this, and to cry out to the Lord.

You've had more than 40 days, almost 40 years perhaps some here. Follow the example of this city, of these people, and come to the Lord.

And we see it's a total response, it's a complete response to the word of the Lord. Verses 6 into verse 9, from very, as it were, high society, the king and the nobles, right down to the normal people.

[ 53 : 02 ] And the king is taking no chances whatsoever here. We see that in verses 7, second half of verse 7 and 8. The Lord hasn't given, we see the Lord hasn't really given instruction on how we should repent, but the king is trying his best here.

Second half of verse 7, let man, nor beast, herd, nor flock, taste anything, or drink anything. There's no food, there's no water. You put on your sack, your sack, your cloth, you cover yourself in ashes, you have no food, you have no water.

Even more than that, your animals don't have any food or water, even them being covered in sackcloth and ashes. The repentance, it is total.

The repentance is total. Repentance must be total. There's no, as it were, half gospel.

Those who are Nineveh, they couldn't repent for a few hours during the week and then go back to their life for the rest of the week. We ever know the Lord or we don't. We ever serve the Lord or we don't.

[ 54 : 15 ] We ever love the Lord or we don't. We ever repented or we haven't. There is, as it were, no fence-sitting of the gospel.

The people of Nineveh knew that from this one message, from this failed prophet, yet the message hit home, it hit their hearts and they realised that there is no such thing as a half repentance.

The gospel requires, as we said, an immediate response. The gospel also requires a total response. We're not saying, if you want to be a believer, then look the part, sound the part, the rest the part.

No, we're saying, if you want to be a true believer and love the Lord and serve the Lord, you must love the Lord and know the Lord and serve the Lord. It's not about how you look or how you sound.

Do you love him? Do you know him? Can you say this evening that you are so aware of your own unworthiness?

[ 55 : 25 ] Like the people of Nineveh, you are so aware that your life is needing this sackcloth and ashes. The Lord doesn't require that. What does the Lord require this evening from those who want to repent, from those who want to give their lives as we're over to him?

As he said in the morning, what does the Lord require from us? What did John Owen say? We bring nothing to our salvation, but a sinner makes it necessary. You come to the Lord this evening, just now.

This evening, in the privacy of your own heart, if you've got time, pray. I've never prayed before, really. The Lord knows, it doesn't matter.

Just speak. Speak to him. If there's no right way, there's no wrong way, don't worry about that. The Lord certainly doesn't. Come to the Lord and ask that he would forgive you, that he would give you, as the people of Nineveh had, give you this sense of urgency to come to him, to take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

He'd give you hope and life. It is there, being purchased for you, if only you would come and lay hold of it. The people repent.

[ 56 : 40 ] The word goes out, the warning goes out, the people then hear the warning, respond to the warning, repent. What takes place, let me finish with this, in verse 10.

The response, it's accepted. verse 10, when God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do them, and he did not do it.

Often, of course, we are dealing here with a God who's beyond our understanding, and God in his mercy towards us, in inspiration of the Holy Scripture, puts us at where human senses onto the Lord himself.

So he says the Lord relented, and the Lord decided not to. We ought to be careful here, we're on very dangerous ground. The Lord has his eternal plan. We affirm that, we confess that, we know that, we've covered that before.

The Lord has his eternal, sovereign plan from before all eternity. but yet, the Lord and his plan makes clear to us that our responses and our responsibility are genuine.

[ 58 : 03 ] We are genuine. This is not a place for the discussion of some theoretical theology. God is sovereign, yes. God is holy, yes.

God's plan is perfect, yes. As we covered last year, that plan has got nothing to do with us. It's beyond our pay grade, it's beyond our understanding.

That's God's secret will. His revealed will, it's what he tells us in scripture. And the revealed will of God is clear. If you want to know him, to be saved, to have Jesus as your saviour, if you want to inherit eternal life, there is no way but through Jesus.

If you want to have the wrath of God that is coming towards you, turned away from you, you must come to Jesus. People of Nineveh heard the warning, they listened to the warning, they reacted to the warning, and from the warning, they then repented.

And the repentance, it mattered. God saw the repentance of this people, and the destruction that was heading towards them never hit them. Not this time anyway, and we'll see that more later on next week, Lord's help.

[ 59 : 35 ] At this point, at this time, the destruction that was heading towards them did not hit this people because this people, they repented. We've said that the undercurrent of this book is mercy, but also, as we said every week, the undercurrent of this book is also the reality that in this account we see a failed and failing prophet who begrudgingly and unwillingly takes the gospel to a people who are dying, a people who are in great danger.

As we come to this chapter, we see once more the glorious reality that behind this we're being pointed and shown towards one, one who came not begrudgingly, not unwillingly.

We come to one who was perfect in his service towards God. we come to Jesus, who came to deliver an evil people, who came, as we heard and read this morning, who came with that message of repent and believe in the gospel.

Repent and turn, repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is at hand. We come to one in this chapter who made a mess of things, and our minds then goes to the one who came who did all things perfectly.

Jonah came and he preached this gospel, and the wrath of God was turned away from this people. Jesus came as he preached the gospel. Yes, the wrath of God was turned away, but more than that, the wrath of God was turned away because it was put unto him.

[ 61 : 23 ] the glorious, glorious news, gospel news, is this very evening, this very evening, you can be right with God.

You can, like the people of Nineveh, know for certain, for certain, you are safe from destruction because this very evening, this very moment, you can be assured of eternal life, assured of complete forgiveness because of the finished work of Jesus, who, unlike Jonah, was a willing servant, who came out of love for his people, out of obedience to the Father, and took on himself the full wrath of all the sins of all his people.

And because Jesus took on himself the full wrath of all the sins of all his people, you can know for certain, if you come to him just now, you will not face that wrath.

you will not face God in judgment. You will not face God hanging over you anymore and waiting to destroy you.

Instead, you will face God as one who has saved you, redeemed you, who now calls you his own. You can come and know him as your saviour, as your God, and as your king this very evening.

[ 63 : 07 ] People of Nineveh heard the message of Jonah. They believed it. They repented. God heard her cry. God did not destroy them.

The gospel is that, but the gospel is so much more glorious. The gospel is not just come and be saved and not go to hell, although that is, we know, the glorious news, but there's more than that.

It's come and be saved and not go to hell, yes, but it's come and be saved and have a life now that is full of the love and joy of a saviour. Come now and, yes, be saved from hell, but also have a certain future ahead of you, a future of joy and peace in the new heavens and the new earth with your fellow believers and with your saviour, your elder brother, for all time.

Don't wait any longer. the people of Nineveh had a set 40 days. We don't have that. We have no time.

We have no time given to us, no time frame given to us. Today is the day of salvation. This moment is the moment God has given you.

[ 64 : 24 ] Tonight, tomorrow, the rest of this year. It's not guaranteed, we know that, but just now it is. This moment is guaranteed.

Do not waste it. Let's bear our heads now, a word of prayer. Lord, we ask you to make these truths of your word real to us this evening. We thank you for the accounts of Jonah, the accounts of other failed servants of yours in scripture.

As we're reminded that even in failure, you can bring forth your gospel power, your saving power. Lord, encourage us this evening as Christians, as those who know and who love you, who have perhaps seen such disaster in our lives, who have seen such lack of service in our life, or revive us again this evening.

Help us to start this new week trusting in you and putting our hope and our joy and our trust in you and you alone. We pray once more for any here who as of yet haven't believed that gospel message for themselves.

We ask that you bring them to yourself even this evening. Like the people of Nineveh, they would trust in your message, trust in the promise you give, that if they come to you, they will live and not be destroyed.

[ 65 : 38 ] We come now and we ask as we sing our final few words of praise, we would do so with hearts and minds full of understanding. Let's call these things in and through and for Christ and his precious name's sake.

Amen. Let's conclude by singing in the Scottish Psalter, again from Psalm 103. The Scottish Psalter, Psalm 103.

We can sing verses 8 down to verse 13 of the Psalm. Psalm 103 in the Scottish Psalter, verses 8 to 13.

Words of grace and God's forgiveness and God's mercy. Psalm 103 verse 8. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious, long suffering and slow to wrath and mercy plenteous.

He will not chide continually nor keep his anger still. With us he dealt not as we sinned nor did requite our ill. Psalm 103 verses 8 to 13.

[ 66 : 42 ] To God's praise. The Lord the God is merciful and he is glorious long suffering and so to wrath in their sick plenty hands.

He will not chide haunted by hurt.

Nh are with others Bourne chi sentence Ira within heart their terminus to core near their end engyptom For the Federation of people, the referral for already this day, So, in so lords, family, he, his death, sand, and so lords, As bad as he sits in sand on the west, so far can he.

From our street buildings in this town, all our living with thee.

Sat, bet he has now and now, come to this children here.

[ 69 : 06 ] Like the wicked stones, the Lord who's at last worship in you.

May the love of God the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, pour you now and forevermore. Amen.