

The Prodigal City: Nineveh's Redemption and Its Connection | Jonah 3:1-10

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[0 : 0 0] All right well good morning Ontario. How are we doing this morning? Good, good. That's great to be with all of you here this morning. My name is Pastor Patrick Daly and I have the privilege of serving here as the pastor of Ontario Community Church. When you come through the doors of the church I want all of you to know that you are loved, you are welcomed here and that Jesus Christ, He died on the cross and He rose again on the third day. He is victorious over sin and we should be encouraged to love God and to love other people. We should be empowered to study the word of God, to grow in Christ and we should engage the community. There's so much to our Lord Jesus Christ. So I want to start off with a question to ask you guys as here's our opening question.

Have you ever felt the urge to start over? Maybe you felt the urge to run away from responsibility. Maybe things are just going on in life that are just so overwhelming you just want Jesus Christ to come back and say you know what I'd rather be with the Lord. I know that for many of us. We've had those situations, we've had the urge to run away from our problems or even to start over.

And no matter how far we run though, I want us to understand that we can always come to the Lord, we can always return to the Lord. We should be encouraged to seek the Lord Jesus Christ no matter what season we are in life, no matter what it is that we are going through. Our God sent His Son Jesus Christ. God is the source of life. God gives us that firm foundation, that truth that we are all looking for, that peace that is surpassing all understanding.

And as we begin our time here, I want us to remember, I want us to think of those moments where we have thought of starting over or we have thought of running away from our responsibilities or we have had those moments of isolation. Maybe there's been a time where you have felt separated from God. Maybe there's been a time there's something that you're struggling with and you need to offer it to God. I want you to remember that although we may feel like it may be the end of our story because of all of the overwhelming things that are happening in our world or in our families, our friends or even our personal life, it is not the end of your story. We have to remember if we feel alone or we feel separated, it is in those moments that we can turn to God, that we can seek Him for He gives us life, He gives us peace, He gives us so much. You see in Scripture we learn about people who experience the mercy and the love of God when they decided to turn their lives over to the Lord. I know at times it's hard to face the truth. I know at times it's hard to face culture or any situation that we are placed in. It can be hard to embrace responsibility.

It can be hard to make amends asking for forgiveness from our brothers and sisters in Christ. It can certainly be difficult to do but God gives us the chance to turn to Him.

[3 : 26] God gives us the chance to go to Him, to run to the Father and to make our life right with Him and maybe for some of us make a return for Him. It is my encouragement for all of us here that we come to know God and that we come to grow in Him. And despite our fears and despite our doubts, despite our hesitations or us running away, we can always turn to God's love and to God's mercy because God's mercy is beyond anything and any man's mercy for that matter. God's love is beyond man's love, human's love. We are never too far gone and we are never too lost. We can start over with God and grow with Him. So I want us to pray and then we're going to go ahead and read from the Word of God. Let's bow our heads and pray together. Father, we thank you for giving us the chance to gather here today to praise, to worship and adore you. We love you. We thank you for allowing us to come here together on this Sunday in this church together. We ask that as we delve into Jonah chapter three, that we may learn about who you are and that we may grow, that we may come to read your Word. May you reveal the meaning to us. May we follow your Son Jesus Christ. Help us open our minds to your guidance and help us open our hearts to love you. Lord, I don't know where everyone is at in their own spiritual journey, but I pray that their spiritual journey is leading towards you. I pray that everyone is on a path to know you and to grow in you. Whatever problems or issues or anything that's going on in our own lives, we offer our burdens and we cast our cares to you.

Be with us as we learn about Nineveh's redemption and its connection in Scripture. And we say these things in Jesus' name and everybody says Amen. Let's go ahead and turn our Bibles to Jonah chapter three. If you, we have our ESVP Bibles, it's going to be on page 921.

921, Jonah chapter three. So it says here, then the word of the Lord came to Jonah's 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 he ran off again. No, he arose and he went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days journey in breath. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey and he called out yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown and the people of Nineveh, they believed in God. They called for a fast and they put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh and he rose from his throne. He removed his robe. He 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 nor flock taste food 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 ways and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn in 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 what? He relented. He relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them. He did not do it. That is a very powerful word.

We start off in verse one where God is coming to Jonah for the second time. For those of you who have been with Ontario and been listening to our study in Jonah, we found that God came to Jonah and Jonah ran off. This time, the second time, God is coming to Jonah again and this time, Jonah is going. He is obeying. He is listening to God and he's going to the city of Nineveh.

[8 : 10] Jonah ran off, right? And he got swallowed by the great fish. He repented and God gave him a second chance, much like how when we sin, we have the opportunity to repent and to be vomited out of the fish. Remember, you get vomited out of the fish onto dry land, which is symbolizing restoration and being fully restored back with God. So God is giving Jonah that divine revelation. And what does it say? It's the same thing as the beginning in the book of Jonah. To arise and to go to Nineveh, that great city, and to call out, as we've talked about this before, he is going to preach against the city of Nineveh to preach out against it. Jonah was called to preach out, to proclaim, to cry out against it. What is this purpose that God has for Jonah? It's to preach to the city of Nineveh, to turn from their evil ways and to get right with God. We know that God mentioned the evil that came up in chapter one. And this time, God is telling Jonah to preach a specific message.

So does Jonah run off again? Does he just say, you know what, I didn't learn my lesson this time? No, absolutely not. He goes to the great city of Nineveh, which is amazing that it says it is such a large, great city that is three days journey to walk in breath. And that is a huge city, especially for that time period. So Jonah goes into the city. And what does he do? He preaches, he proclaims, he calls out just as God had called him to do. Jonah gives the warning that Nineveh needs to change their ways, their evil ways. So did the people do nothing? Like, what are you crazy, Jonah? I'm not going to listen to you. No, they believe the, the, the, do they get angry and cast out Jonah? They don't, they believed in God. And this is an incredible critical part of the story where the people repent. I just have to say that Jonah must have had some amazing speaking abilities.

And through the power of God was able to get an entire city of 120,000 people to repent and turn from their sin to get right with God. And this is how God operates in our world.

He calls each and every one of us for his purpose. God called Jonah to preach to the city and in the city, Jonah preached when Jonah preached, they responded. Isn't that a wonderful encouragement for us when we share with our friends, with our family and the people that we interact with, the faith that we hold dear to? Isn't this not an encouragement that when God calls us, we must respond? I hope it's an encouragement for you because God calls each and every one of us.

Just as God called Jonah for a greater purpose in his life, so too does God call us for greater purpose in our lives. You know, something that's really sad in our culture. You use technology, you use your phones, you play video games, and these things are cool, cool tools to use. Right?

[11 : 40] There's some great games out there, right? There's some great apps and there's some funny, you know, dancing on TikTok or whatever. But the thing is, that should not become our life. That is just a tool that we can use. How many of us have felt lonely or isolated before? How many of us have felt that there is something that is missing in my life? I know that, you know, I'm a younger, younger man. And I realize that a lot of people who are my age and people who are younger than me, they feel that there's something missing in their life. And they search online, they search through their technology, they search through the things that are fleeting for purpose. But let me tell you something. To seek God is to find greater purpose. To seek God is to find new life in him. To seek God is to find identity in him. By seeking God, your life will never be the same. And it says how in scripture that the city, they called for a fast and to put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least. It is in the next verse that the word reaches the king of

Nineveh. It says in verse six that the word reached the king and he, and then this is very important. What does he do? He arises, he rose from his throne. Then what does he do? He removes his robe and he covers himself with sackcloth and he sat in ashes. That's very weird when you're reading that. You're like, what? Okay, he takes off his robe. That kind of makes sense, right?

He covers himself with sackcloth and he sat in ashes. What in the world does that mean? And we should take note of this. As modern readers, we don't understand the significance of what the king is doing here. And so in your notes here, the king of Nineveh removed his robe. He covered himself with sackcloth and he sat in ashes. I tried finding an image that would represent this. This was the best I could find. So to remove his robe. Now, some of you have studied scripture. Some of you may have seen movies where someone who is going through, they're depressed, they're grieving, they rip their clothes. How many of you know what I'm talking about? So there's actually a difference between ripping your robe and taking and removing your robe as in the context of what the king is doing. When someone ripped their robe, that was a moment of vulnerability. That was a moment of grief of loss. In this context, though, it's not saying that the king ripped his robe. He is removing his robe. And there's a big difference. Removing the robe, it is an act of humility. It is laying down your power and going to God for obedience. It is going to God for submission and repentance to the Lord. That is different than what you find in, for example, the book of Job, where there is the tearing of the robe. It's something I don't think that should be overlooked. Because this is specific to the context of a king who's laying down his power for God, as opposed to someone who is grieving for the loss of everything. So it goes to show you that the king of Nineveh, he received the call.

He heard the warning from Jonah that the city would be overthrown. And instead of rejecting the warning, he did something about it. The king, he responded to the call. And what I want you guys to think about that is sometimes we need to respond to God's call in our lives, even if it is through the words spoken through somebody. Does this remind you of when the captain rebuked Jonah?

When he said, get up and call out to your God. In this context, it has to do with the king. So what about the other things? To cover yourself, when the king covered himself in sackcloth, he, it's taking a time to mourn. It's taking a time to grieve. It's taking a time, kind of a modern day example would be if you were to, how many of you have used burlap before? Right? For feed or storage or whatever. Have you tried wearing that or felt it rub against your skin?

[16 : 24] It's not the most comfortable of things. It's not silk. It's not cotton. It's not any of the other kind of clothing. Can you imagine wearing that though? Get kind of itchy after a while. I must admit that that's kind of the equivalent to that. It's supposed to make you uncomfortable though, because your focus is not on your clothes. Your focus is on suffering, if you will. Your focus is on God. So when he's, he's taking off his robe, the king's taking off the robe, he's putting on sackcloth, something that's extremely uncomfortable and he's sitting in ashes. These in your notes, you'll see there's verses here. What's very unusual about this passage is that it's all three. Typically in scripture, you'll find someone wearing sackcloth and fasting or someone removing their robe, such as in first and second Samuel, or sitting in ashes. Here you have the king doing all three, and that goes to show you the extent at which the seriousness that this king was doing. When you can imagine a king doing that, that's not something you see kings do all the time. It's like if you can imagine, I'm, if you can imagine the president or if you can imagine the mayor doing something mourning for the sins of this country or mourning for the sins of the state or mourning for the sins of the city, that would be a very similar, maybe not exactly the same, because I can't imagine a politician wearing sackcloth, but you get the idea though, the idea of mourning. I mean, maybe some of our politicians should wear sackcloth, but the point is though, taking time to mourn for sin is something that's incredible. And this makes me think though about the leaders that we have in our own lives, from the local leaders, right, from the statewide, national and global leaders, even people who are in positions of power in corporations or governments. This is a reminder for us to pray for our leaders, those who hold in positions of power. They have been placed there, and one of the things that we can do is ask that God will intervene, that they will hear the call from God in the same way that this king of Nineveh heard the call from Jonah. Now, I'm not asking all of you to go out into the streets and to proclaim that the city will be destroyed, but what we can do is certainly pray for our leaders, and I want this to be an encouragement for you. If there are, we pray that our leaders come to know the Lord and use their power for making good and Godly decisions. That's certainly something, I know we can disagree with policies that are made, I know that we can disagree with things that they do. We can certainly pray for them though. We can certainly pray that God will intervene and show them what truth is. Wouldn't it be fantastic if you heard of a politician or maybe read about a politician who gave their life over to the Lord and made laws or legislations or made decisions that impacted the community for good? Just think about that. I mean, when you think of a king in this context, someone turning it around and going as far as to lay aside his power for God is just a wonderful story. And we all need to pray for those who are in authority that God would lead and guide them to make good, Godly decisions. Like I said, it is a prayer that we should have about our leaders, that they come to realize that although they are in positions of power, there is a power that they are accountable to. I want you to think about that. No matter how you can be the king of the world, you can be the king of a country, you can be the president of the

United States, but you have accountability to God. And to lay aside your robe is to recognize, yeah, you may have power, but there's someone who's more powerful than I will ever be, then you will ever be, then any of us will ever be, and that is our Lord, our God. So the king, he issues a decree which says, let neither man nor beast nor herd nor flock taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water. So you can't eat and you can't drink. And what's so weird about this verse is that the people and the animals. That's a very interesting one. So I'm going to go to this next slide here. I tried finding something with animals, it was rather difficult. I couldn't find an image where the people were wearing sackcloth as well as the animals. But you get the idea though, just think of this as an idea. So the people and the animals, they fasted in more sackcloth by the king's decree. So nobody is going to eat, nobody is going to have a drink. So the king's like, all right, that's it. No more food, you're going to have to wait, no more water. We are taking time to wear sackcloth, to fast, and to pray to God that this city will be saved. Can you imagine if something, if a decree was made by a leader? That would be, that would be incredible. And we can see in scripture that this is incredible, that the city is repentant and they're turning from their sin to go to God. Scholars have debated, why in the world, scripture is funny, right?

Why in the world would even the animals have to put on sackcloth here? Like I understand why people would need to put on sackcloth, but why in the world is the animals? Well, the only thing that I could find on this is just the idea that the king wanted to make sure that everybody, I want to make sure everybody is repenting here. I want to include these animals because they're part of my domain, they're part of the kingdom here, so I got to make sure that they repent too, because I want to make sure that this city is saved. So it's just kind of like a, it's showing this kind of over exaggeration, if you will. It's just showing that the king is just making sure everybody is going to repent.

So that's, the intention here is just to make sure that everyone realizes the depth and the seriousness, the gravity of the situation. Again, can you imagine your dogs and your cats and your horses and your cows and your chickens all wearing sackcloth and you as well? It's just quite a funny image. Again, I tried finding some sort of image on there, but I couldn't. But I know there is some humor in this, but if a leader was to command to do this, to repent, I'd put on some sackcloth. It might be harder to get my children in, it might be hard to get animals to do it, but you get the idea though. The people were commanded by the king to fast and to be covered with sackcloth and to call out mightily to God. And as many of you heard in the previous, in previous sermons, you know that this isn't crying in desperation for help. It's calling upon God. When we call upon the Lord, we will be saved. And that's, no, it's not that. To think that the city of Nineveh went to such great lengths to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord is remarkable. It makes me wonder, how can we respond when God calls us to repent of our sins? Do we mourn for the wrong that we have done? Do we pray and do we ask for forgiveness from God?

Certainly, there is a call in Scripture for us, even as a community, to turn from our sins and to get right with God. The final part of verse eight says, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. You know what's unique about that verse? It's saying, turn from your sin, even the sins you're doing right now. Like that's a crazy wording right there. It's kind of like, hey, you guys got to stop what you're doing. And I know you're doing wrong right now. You got to stop right now. Like that's a crazy decree by the king. Turn from your sins, even the ones you're committing from. And this is a great reminder that when we are turning from our sins, we should turn from the ones that we are in process of doings or the ones that we are planning to do. Don't see your sin to completion. Stop from your sin in its traps. And I just love how the word of God is saying that. I love how this king is saying like, okay, stop even the ones that are in process. And it's a reminder for us that if you are currently sinning, don't keep living or doing the sin. Even like I said, if you're, if you're planning or you're in process of doing sin, turn from that sin too. Don't see it to completion. Stop. Stop from your sin in its tracks. And I certainly hope that if any of you are sinning that you will stop immediately. No, well, I'm, I'm, I'm in the process of stealing a, you know, embezzling money. I'm in the process of doing this. No, you got to stop what you're doing right now. Turn from your sins, repent. Verse nine goes on to say, and I love what the king is asking. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish. Does that look does that sound similar to another question that was asked in the book of Jonah? You remember the captain in chapter one? You know, the captain said, in chapter one, verse six, perhaps the God will give us a thought that we may not perish.

[26 : 11] And here you have the king that's saying, who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish. And so what's very interesting is when you think about the the captain and the king. These are people who are positions in positions of authority. They used their power to command their people to call out to God. Do these, did these, did the captain or the king know the Lord? I don't think so. Because why would they be questioned? Well, who knows?

Who knows what God's going to do? Or maybe God will give us a thought. I don't believe they did. But even though they didn't believe in the Lord and even though they weren't following the Lord in his way, they were still like using their power to get people to turn to God. And I think that's very interesting in scripture that we're seeing. They command their people to turn to God through prayer and repentance so that they may not perish. Just like how the storm that was happening earlier in scripture, right? To call out to their God. But remember, the sailors were saved.

They turned to the Lord and in the same way the king is encouraging his people to turn to the Lord. When a city is in sin, when a country is going more towards the darkness or when someone you know is in sin, pray to the Lord, pray for others so that they may turn to the Lord and they may influence other people to come to know the Lord. We pray that our friends, our family, and if you find yourself in a position of authority, if you are in in charge, if you're in charge in some capacity, I would think, use that for good. Not every leader is a Christian, but that doesn't mean we can't pray for divine intervention or pray for people to come to know the Lord. This is the wonderful thing that we see in scripture. Twice you see two people who are in those authority, authoritative positions to lead people to God. In both instances, both times, these leaders, they don't know the outcome. They don't know the answer. But we know the answer that when they call upon the Lord, they will be saved. I think that's just remarkable. Because you see, all who call upon the Lord shall be saved. It's a wonderful encouragement. The leaders, they don't know God, but they will know the forgiveness, the grace and the mercy that God has for those who seek him.

And in verse 10, it says that God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, and God what, destroyed the city? No, God relented. When people turn away from their sin, or when someone pleads for the people, for the city, God is compassionate, and he shows his mercy to them.

Just like how Nineveh was the prodigal city, a sin city, if you will, a city that was in sin, that was doing evil, and the Lord knew what was going on. They had rebelled. It reminds me just like how the Israelites had rebelled against God in the wilderness. God's mercy and compassion was there when they turned away from sin. In your notes, you will see that there are, this is what we call the prodigal cycle. There are seven stories that I found in scripture. We're not going to go through all of them. Okay, that would be a very extensive study. But these are about people who may have left God or ran from God. They faced the consequences. They repented and were made right with God to be restored in relationship with him. Just like how we're learning, or how we learn, about Jonah the prophet, running from God, facing the consequences, being in that vulnerability, being isolated from God, praying the prayer of repentance, and being restored. That is the prodigal cycle. That is what happens. The city of Nineveh, the people rebel against God through their wickedness. There is the threat of destruction. It shows the consequences of what happens if they do not repent. The people repent, and when hearing Jonah's warning, they are forgiven when

[30 : 58] God relents of the disaster that's to happen. Their decision, it leads them to restoration, because at this moment, at this time in scripture, Nineveh saved. The prodigal son in Luke chapter 15, the son takes his money, he leaves his father. Does he invest his money? No, he squanders it.

He squanders his money. He ends up facing the consequences through famine and poverty. He comes to his senses. He decides to return to the father. He comes to the father he has taken back in. And what is there? There is a celebration from the father. It's the same. It's not exactly the same, but it's a pretty similar storyline. The Israelites in the wilderness, Moses interceded for the people symbolizing the love, showing the love that Moses had for the people. Remember when they worshiped the golden calf? Moses pleaded to the Lord. There you go. King David, I know we're pressed on time, so we're not going to go, I'm kind of going through it here. King David rebels by committing adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. There was the consequence, which was the death of David's child. The restoration was the birth of Solomon.

Right? Because remember, God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, and David is forgiven by the Lord. So we know Solomon. We know him in scripture. And there's a couple other ones. One of my favorite ones is that last one, Peter's denial and restoration in there, where Peter denies Christ. How many times? Three times. He denies the Lord three times. There is the consequence where Peter is mourning. Right? And then later on, remember in the book of John where Jesus is asking, Peter, do you love me? That would be the repentance. And the restoration is in the book of Acts, where Peter is a key leader in church history when the church is expanding. So that's a really cool one. And I just want you to think. So we had the seven prodigal stories, right? Jonah and the prophet.

There's tons of verses for you to check out on there. But the main point is that you see this pattern of sin, repentance and restoration. That goes to show you the vast amount of love and compassion that God has towards us. And it makes me think of our story in Christ. How there is rebellion, right? We acknowledge that we are sinners in need of a Savior. There's retribution that the Bible tells us that there's consequences for our rebellion, for having life without God. There's repentance, how the Bible instructs us to repent and to sin no more. Think of the woman at the well, or excuse me, the when Jesus said, go and sin no more.

When the Pharisees threw the woman towards, towards Jesus, Jesus said, go and sin no more. So the Bible instructs us to repent and sin no more reconciliation. The Bible assures us that we can be made a right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. And finally restoration. The Bible promises that we can be restored in our relationship with God. And it is God that calls each and every one of us to make a decision for him to have Christ at the center of our life.

[35 : 01] To turn from our sin and instead turn towards him. Will you answer that call? Will you start over?

Being connected, restored, or right with God? And in that I have a closing question to ask you.

Let's see here. Well, the closing question is how can I start or start over with Christ at the center of my life? So let's pray. Father God, we are in awe of who you are. You are holy, strong, and mighty. Your mercy is amazing. And you forgive. You forgive us even when it is hard for us to forgive ourselves and to forgive other people. We are amazed by the story of Jonah and how you used him to bring a city to choose you to repent and to turn to you and not to remain in sin.

And in the same manner we pray that we can respond for your call for our lives and that we can find you, that we can come to know you, that we can come to grow in you and to be able to go out into the world to share our faith with others. We pray that we all know you, that we grow in you, and that we go out into the world and do good for you in your holy name. May we not be afraid of you.

May we not be afraid of who you are or your word. May we respond by being a light in this dark and confusing world. May we arise and go out into the world today with you being for us and not against us. We pray for those who do not know you, that they may come to know you. We pray for those that are isolated, they're separated, they're struggling, they have a lot of stuff that's going on in their life. We pray that you give them peace, that you give them calm, that you give them strength, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that they may get through whatever it is they're going on in their life and may they be restored in you. And for those of us who are restored, may we be on a path of growth, may we be a path of going out and doing good in your name, that we won't be like babies who are just on milk, that we can eat solid food.

[37 : 27] We ask God that you lead us and guide us as you always do. It is in Jesus' name that we pray and everybody says.