

Jonah and Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Morning all. If you don't know me, I'm John Lau. I've been here a long time. Over the last seven weeks, we have been studying the Old Testament Book of Jonah.

! Do you have a chance to reveal those sermons? Did you miss any one of them? Let me encourage you to go to our church website or our YouTube channel to hear or watch Jonah again.

As Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, why do we spend two months reading a book from the Old Testament? What does the Book of Jonah or his story have to do with Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the Christian faith, as it says in Hebrews chapter 12?

The Book of Jonah set out to help us to understand who we are as God's creation, especially about the situation and conditions that humans are in, and who God, our day creator, is, to understand his grace and compassion through the treatment and interaction between the characters of the Book, the sailors, the Ninevites, Jonah, and God.

The Book of Jonah teaches that God's grace and compassion, His love, extend beyond Israel to the other nations into the whole creation.

[1 : 3 3] Grace is for everyone. The Book of Jonah demonstrates God's grace and compassion through his unrelenting pursuits towards his prophet Jonah to draw to attention the inconsistency of his claims of being a follower and worshiper of God.

And in turn, it's also written for us to reflect on our relationship with God. Instead of accepting that they are calling to help others come to know the true God, to know about his grace and compassion, many believers like Jonah pick and choose who they share God's love with.

If someone has wronged or hurt them, they will expect God to lay out retribution. They are willing to step towards those people. Many Christians consider people of certain ethnicity are more dangerous or barbaric.

They look at people holding different belief systems to them as enemy of God, or people with certain practice in life as outcasts. But in fact, they cause God more grief than those unbelievers.

To treat others with contempt is not acceptable to God. To show conformity of action on the outside, but harbor bitterness and curses in your heart, is as wicked as those deliberately rebels against God.

[3 : 1 0] Let's revisit how God pursued Jonah through Jonah's interaction with the sailors, the Ninevites, and God. And how Jesus used Jonah in his teaching.

So if you turn to me back to Jonah, in chapter 1, it tells us that after the word of the Lord come to Jonah, sending him to go to Nineveh and preach against his wickedness, Jonah went away to the opposite direction to flee.

In verse 4 of chapter 1, it tells us that the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to be broken up.

The sailors each cried out to their own God and was doing everything to save their life. And the captains found Jonah in deep sleep under deck.

What the captains say to Jonah revealed something common about how people treat their gods. He tells Jonah to get up and call on your God, maybe take notice of us so that we will not perish.

[4 : 20] To many people, their God is at a distance. They only approach their God when they want something. They do not have an ongoing relationship with their God.

Looking at Jonah, even though he understands his God is of heaven who made the sea and dry land, do you agree that he tried to flee from God so that he thinks like those sailors and other people too?

He saw no difference to the unbeliever. He does not understand the uniqueness of the Lord that he came to worship, and he misses the heart of grace and compassion of the Lord.

A typical case of familiarity breeds contempt. He came to worship or feed the Lord, but in his heart of hearts, there is another God that takes the center place.

The sailors pray and ask the Lord not to hold them accountable for the killing of an innocent man. For you, Lord, have done all you please just before they threw Jonah into the sea.

[5 : 35] They believe the divine being always do as they please. Isn't that what a lot of people believe too? Or maybe you also believe that. We can see all through the book of Jonah, he did exactly that.

He did only what pleases him. And what takes place in Jonah's heart is himself. He, in fact, is his own God. Such as they want to save themselves, the sailors were not willing to sacrifice someone to achieve their salvation, especially an innocent man.

Repeatedly, the sailors did their best to save each other, but in the end, they have no choice but to rely on the word of the Lord through his wayward prophet. We will come back to this sacrifice of the innocent later.

After throwing Jonah overboard and a raging sea climbed down, the sailors realized that the Lord has answered this desperate plea to save them. The sailor saw what genuine faith and worship looks like.

In verse 16, at this, the men greatly feared the Lord and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him. The God-appointed prophet, the man who think he is all right with God, ran away and tried to flee from God.

[7 : 01] Where the pagan sailors became a true believer, understood that they have saved by God's grace and compassion when they understand that salvation was only from the Lord.

They entered into a confident relationship with God by vows. What a contrast between Jonah and the sailors. To Jonah, the Lord is only another mean for him to get what he wants.

This fact about Jonah's heart shows up more in his interaction with the Ninevites. With the word of the Lord come to him a second time after the fish vomited him out on dry land.

In chapter 3 of Jonah, it tells us that the great city of Nineveh was so large that it takes three days to go across it. And Jonah didn't even go into the heart of the city.

He only walked one journey. And he proclaimed the dooming message, 40 more days and Nineveh will be overthrown. He delivered the Lord's message with accuracy but without any compassion or grace.

[8 : 14] The fact that he went out of the city and sat down and waited to see God's place judgment on Nineveh after the whole city has already shown signs of repentance, so even more about his heart.

Further on, he became angry at God when God relented and did not bring the destruction on the city. He had threatened. Jonah's reaction reveals again how far his heart is from the Lord.

He is so blinded towards God's grace and compassion for all people. The king of Nineveh in chapter 3, verse 9 was betting on the possibility that maybe God will relent and with compassion turned from his fearsome anger so that they will not perish.

He is willing to stop and give up all their evil ways and their violence and physically show signs of remorse to exchange for God's mercy.

They are willing to untrust their life into the mercy of God and respond to God's correction. Historically, we know that the change by the Nineveh was very short-lived.

[9 : 28] We might even question the generiveness of their repentance. But their quick response to repent in repentance was praised by Jesus as we have just read out.

Saying both Matthew 12, 41 and Luke 11, 32 that the man of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation. and condemn it for they repent at the preaching of Jonah and now something greater than Jonah is here.

The speediness of the Nineveh in responding to Jonah's message is a great contrast towards Jonah's lowness in coming to terms of God's grace and compassion of the idols of his own heart.

God uses sailors to show Jonah what it means to truly fear and worship him. is to honor the relationship you have with God.

Submit and commit to him. God used the Nineveh to show the slowest of hearts and the idols in Jonah's heart.

[10 : 37] What has God shown you over the last seven weeks? What is the lesson that you have been taking on your heart? looking at Jonah's heart, it got me thinking about his prayer, especially with this hindsight of what happened in the interaction between God and Jonah in chapter 4.

Going back through this just a short four chapters of Jonah, I would say the sinister side of me do wonder about the state of mind of Jonah when he say those prayers in chapter 2.

I do not think Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 is a confession and repentance prayer. It sounds more like he was glad that even though it was dark and fishy, disgusting, smelly, at least he's not in the lake of fire.

As he sat around in the dark in the belly of the fish, he was still alive, maybe even gaining some strength. I wonder in chapter 2 his prayer is it just a thanks thinking that God somehow is still alright with me.

God had kept me to race again in the resurrection that last day because that's what the Jews believe. That's what Martha tell Jesus when Jesus told her that Lazarus will rise again in John 11.

[12 : 04] I'm thinking that because just as Jonah thinks that he's still alright with God, maybe he's thinking that him offering himself as a sacrifice to save the sailor have, even now he's running away from God and he's less guilty because of selfish act.

As he cries, salvation comes of the Lord! I'm ready to stay here until the last day! And God commanded the fish to back him out. It's like God said, rightio, go to the great city, to Nineveh and proclaim the message I gave you and make good on your vow to serve me.

Jonah's anger towards God for relenting from destruction and his tension sped about the plans show me that he still has many, many things to God and that's why I do not think his prayer in the belly of fish is a sign of repentance.

Last week, look at the compassion of God from chapter 4. God's compassion manifests by his concern about Jonah by providing a plan to ease his discomfort and sending him to the great city with 120,000 Ninevites who cannot tell the right from the left.

I can't tell my left. But he said right from the left. God voluntarily attached himself with Jonah and Ninevites. He patiently guided, provided for his wayward prophet to lead him to repentance.

[13 : 39] for someone who has all the right to be angry with Jonah, God gently asks with great restraint, is it right for you to be angry?

Is it right for you to be angry about the plant? To provoke Jonah into a deeper self-reflection. God relentlessly pursued Jonah to turn him away from the idol that will eventually destroy him and turn him back towards God himself.

God used a plant to sprung up overnight and die overnight to show to Jonah the inconsistency of his worship towards him.

There was no rebuke, no harsh words. The way that God dealt with Ninevites and Jonah truly support Jonah's understanding about God that he is a generous, gracious, compassionate God, slow to anger and abandoning enough.

God has all the time he has and he'll use all the time they need to get to repent and turn to him.

[14 : 51] Let me say that again. God has all the time he has and he'll use all the time needed to turn us and repent back to him. it's like what Peter teaches in his second letter in chapter 3 verse 8 to 9.

Do not forgive anything, dear friends. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some are slowest.

Instead he's patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. if God's grace and compassion can change someone like Jonah who also changed you and bring you into a new life alive under our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' time both Luke told us that Jesus referred to Jonah in his teaching especially when the religious leader come to see him.

Matthew 12 verse 38 which have read out for us before. Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Lord said to him we want to see a sign from you.

[16 : 09] He answered a wicked and dangerous generation asked for a sign but none will be given it except the signs of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the hill fresh so the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Again in Luke 11 starting verse 29 it reads as the crowds increased Jesus said this is a wicked generation they asked for signs but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah as Jonah was a sign to the Nine so also will the son of man be to this generation Jesus has very strong word for the religious leader because they think they're good enough to be accepted by God but they could not recognize who Jesus is and reject the one only true son of God when they question Jesus authority and demand a sign from him none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah Jesus mentioned two things in these two passages firstly he creates the experience Jonah has in the belly of the hills fish to his experience of the three days and three nights in the heart of the earth

Jonah will not be thrown into the depth of the sea to save the sailor even the pagan sailors would not accept that killing the innocent man is forgivable but Jesus who is innocent without sin has made to be sin offerings for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God when Jesus went to the cross he repeats the suffering of Jonah but in an infinite greater degree when he cries out on the cross my God my God why have you forsaken me for he went into the death of the death and separation from God into the death of divine judgment to save Jonah and us secondly as Jesus was assigned as Jonah was assigned to the most wicked people of his time the

Ninevites so also Jesus the son of man is assigned to this generation I love this line from John's preaching this is I'm just quoting you again let me say it again if God can save both Ninevites and Jonah if God can cause them to change there's no man or woman too sinful that God's grace and compassion cannot touch or save and there's no man or woman that's so good that do not need God's grace and compassion groan if you are a Christian no matter how you only recently come to submit your life to Jesus or you have been one for almost your whole life when you hear about the gospel of

Jesus every Sunday or doing your own reading of God's word has it driven you to deeper levels of humanity grace compassion and forgiveness towards others especially those who have groan will hurt you. Is Jesus your true joy and treasure? Don't get caught up with earthly things that spun up overnight and die overnight. Praise God when suffering and hardship comes into your life, for they are God pursuing you, like how he pursued Jonah, to make you holy and helping you become worthy of the calling you have received. Remember Jesus your Lord and the things they have done for you to be right with your Creator, your Father in heaven. We are saved not because of what any righteous things we have done, but purely because of the grace and compassion of our God, of his mercy.

[20 : 47] If our gracious and compassionate God can change the Ninevites and Jonah, he will save and change you too. Come, let's sing for joy to the Lord. Let's shout aloud to the rock of our salvation.

Let's come before him with thanksgiving and instill him with music and song, for the Lord is the great God, the great kings above all gods. In his hands are the death of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he has made it, and his hands form the dry land.

Come, let's bow down in worship. Let's kneel before the Lord, our maker, for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if only you would hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Repent and believe the good news.