

EASTER & THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW

“Jonah – More than a fish tale”

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/>

Devotional/Bible Study for 25 April 2021 – 1 May 2021

The book of Jonah, written primarily in the third person, does not explicitly name the prophet as the author of his own account, but we have no reason to doubt either the inspiration or the historical veracity of the book. Identified in verse 1 as the son of Amittai, Jonah came from a town called Gath-hepher, near Nazareth in the area that later came to be known as Galilee (2 Kings 14:25). This makes Jonah one of the few prophets who hailed from the northern kingdom of Israel.

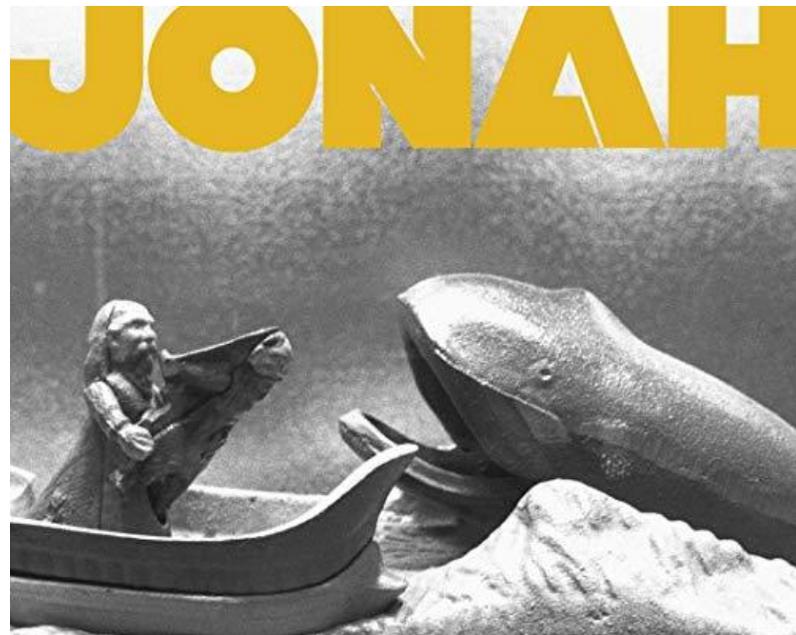
During Jonah’s years as a prophet, Israel stood tall among the nations, though in a political rather than a spiritual sense. The reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 BC), who was an evil king before the Lord, saw Israel’s borders expand to their greatest extent since the time of Solomon. Increased prosperity resulted in a materialistic culture that thrived on injustice to the poor and oppressed, one of the key messages of Jonah’s prophetic contemporary, Amos.

However, rather than direct Jonah to prophesy to his own people, God commissioned him to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. At first unwilling to make the journey northeast to deliver God’s message, Jonah turned and aimed for the farthest westward point known to him—Tarshish, located in modern-day Spain. After God eventually turned Jonah in the right direction, the prophet obediently prophesied to the people of Nineveh while Ashurdan III (772–754 BC) sat on the throne of Assyria. Though Assyria had been in a politically weakened state for some time, by the time of Jonah their cruelty to captives and other undesirables was well-known in Israel, creating an obvious need for Jonah’s message of repentance.

Jonah was one of only four writing prophets that Jesus mentioned by name during His earthly ministry (Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah were the others). But Jonah received more than a mere mention. Jesus actually identified Himself with the prophet’s three-day sojourn in the belly of the great fish, noting it as a foreshadowing of His own death, when Jesus would spend three days “in the heart of the earth,” before His resurrection (Matthew 12:39–41). Jesus’s identification with the prophet at the lowest point of Jonah’s life finds echoes in the book of Hebrews, where it teaches that Jesus “had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17). The book of Jonah stands as an important link in the prophetic chain, giving readers a glimpse of Christ’s death and resurrection hundreds of years before they actually occurred.

When the call of God came to him, Jonah could not see beyond his own selfish desire for God to punish the Assyrians. How could God want him to take a message of mercy to such people? Before Jonah could relay God’s message, he had to be broken. He had to learn something about the mercy of the Lord. Through his flight to Tarshish, his shipwreck, and his time in the great fish, Jonah was convinced in a powerful way that all salvation comes from the Lord (Jonah 2:9). And because of God’s supreme power, only God decides where to pour out His salvation and His mercy (4:11).

Do you ever find yourself fighting God—your desires pulling you one way, God’s desires pulling you another? Jonah found himself in that very position, but his own desire won out over God’s for a time. Or so he thought. As we often see in our



own lives, God accomplished His purposes through Jonah even though it meant God doling out a heavy dose of humility on a prideful and unwilling heart.

While Jonah eventually departed and proclaimed God's message, the lesson of his story does not end there. Jonah prophesied to Nineveh but he wasn't happy about it (Jonah 4:1). Herein we find another touchstone for our lives: aligning our desires with God's is always a process. Just because we go through the motions of following God's will does not mean our hearts are aligned with His. God wanted Jonah's actions and his heart. He wants ours as well.

- When was the last time God heard your cries for help and answered your prayers?
- What can you learn from reflecting on that time in your life?

Remember what Jesus says to his disciples: *Do not be afraid and peace be with you.*

Shout with joy to the Lord!
Worship the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy!
Know that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are his.
We are his people,
the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;

go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name.

For the Lord is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues
to each generation.

Second Chances - Jonah 3:1-5

Summary - God told Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh with God's message to them, and this time Jonah obeyed. Jonah walked through the city for a day, telling them that they would be overthrown in 40 days. The Ninevites believed God and called a city-wide fast of repentance.

Key Verse- 3:5

Ten things this passage says-

- The Lord sent His word to Jonah a second time.
- God asked Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh with the message that God told him.
- Jonah arose and went to Nineveh.
- Nineveh was an exceedingly great city.
- Nineveh was a 3-day journey around.
- Jonah went a day's journey into the city.
- Jonah told the Ninevites that Nineveh would be overthrown in 40 days.
- The people of Nineveh believed God.
- They called for a fast and put on sackcloth.
- Everyone in the city joined in this mourning, from the greatest to the least of them.
- Ten things this passage does NOT say-
- God didn't have to remind Jonah of his task, because Jonah ran to do it as soon as the fish expelled him.
- The second command of the Lord to Jonah differed from the first.
- Once again, Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, and ran away instead.
- Nineveh was a small, quiet city.
- Jonah did a whole-hearted job, and walked all around the entire city, 3 days, in order for everyone to know of God's judgment.

- Jonah’s journey of one day through Nineveh wasn’t enough for everyone to know of God’s judgment.
- God didn’t give the Ninevites time to repent, but promised immediate destruction.
- The people of Nineveh thought Jonah was crazy, and wouldn’t listen to him.
- The Ninevites behavior was not perceivably altered.
- The Ninevites were divided in their response towards Jonah. Some repented, but others were hardened towards him.

What does this passage teach me about God?

- He is merciful and gives second chances.
- He requires his children to obey.
- He is consistent.
- How can I apply this to my life?
- Obey God.
- Repent when He brings my sin to light.
- Repentance should be immediate, whole-hearted, and complete. No one is exempt.

Discussion Questions –

- How many times did God give this command to Jonah? V1
- What does it mean that the word of the Lord “came to Jonah”? V1
- What does this verse show us about God’s character? V1
- How does God’s wording of this command differ from the one He gave in 1:2? V2
- From this verse and what we have studied before, what can you tell me about Nineveh? (“Three times Nineveh is described as a great city [1:2; 3:2; 4:11]. As noted in the introduction, the city was surrounded by an inner wall and an outer wall. The huge inner wall [50 feet wide and 100 feet high] was about eight miles in circumference while the outer wall encompassed fields and smaller towns. The words ‘great city’ probably included the city of Nineveh proper and its administrative environs. His instructions were simply to travel those 550 miles to Nineveh and preach the message the Lord would provide at the appropriate time.)
- How is our command from the Lord similar to Jonah’s? V2
- What was Jonah’s response to God’s command this time? V3
- How far was “a three days walk”? V3 (60 miles, or 20 miles a day).
- What do you think it means “Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk”? V4
- Do you think Jonah obeyed God wholeheartedly in this verse? V4
- Why do you think God gave 40 days before Nineveh would be overthrown? V4
- Can you think of other times in the Bible where 40 days are mentioned? V4 (The time of rain during the flood- Gen. 7:4; the time Moses spent on the mountain with the Lord- Ex 24:18 and Ex 34:28; the time the Israelites went to spy out the Promised Land- Num 13:25; the time Goliath challenged the Israelites- 1 Sam. 17:16; Elijah’s time of testing in the wilderness- 1Kings 19:8; Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness- Matt 4:2, Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2; Jesus time of ministry on earth after His resurrection- Acts 1:3.)
- What significance does “40 days” have in the Bible? V4
- Who was going to overthrow Nineveh? Why? V4
- What was the Ninevites’ response to this warning? V5
- What was the purpose of fasting and putting on sackcloth? V5
- Who among the Ninevites was involved in these actions? V5
- What was the hoped-for outcome of these repentant actions? V5
- How did this repentance reflect on God’s power? Jonah’s? V5

Talking to Our Heavenly Father - *If we have faith, our prayers will be answered.*

You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You

- Our hearts and deepest sympathies go out to Ms. Debra Matties whose mother-in-law, Ms. Evelyn M. “Evie” Matthies-Reichert, passed away on Monday, April 19, 2021 after an extended illness. Cards of condolences can be mailed to: Ms. Debra Matthies, 1466 North 12th Avenue, West Bend, Wisconsin 53090.
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, prayers for successful upcoming surgery and containment of growth; Mr. Alan Kempf for strength as he’s provided times of rest and refreshment; alankempf33@gmail.com; 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Bro. Martin Martinelli, healing and restoration after open heart surgery and rehab after Ischemic stroke; 659 South 14th Ave. West Bend. WI 53095
- Mr. Ted Meilahn, restoration of strength and courage as he lives into his “new normal”; 1085 Fondu du Lac Ave., Box 23, Kewaskum, WI 53040
- Ms. Vivien Loomis, healing and strength after surgery; 1119 Schmidt Road, #1, West Bend, WI 53090
- Ms. Julia Stettler, strength and ability to meet the challenges and changes that will occur during the next few months; 107 Cedar Ridge Dr. #N313, West Bend, WI 53095
- 5th Avenue UMC’s Laity, Laity Leadership, Pastor & Bro. Martin – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
- Bro. Bob Krell, continued prayer for healing; 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- The welfare and security of the United States of America and democracy itself.
- Mr. Roger Sacia, prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing; 502 Crocus Court, West Bend, WI 53095
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength after hospitalization; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. William (Bill) Hornung, in inpatient rehabilitation; Mrs. Ginger Hornung, strength and courage; W193 N16339 Lea Fon Circle, Jackson, WI 53037

Let us pray:

You, O God, are our Shepherd.

You provide everything we need.

You let us rest in green meadows

and lead us beside quiet streams.

You renew our strength,

and guide us in ways that bring honor to Your name.

guarding and guiding every step we take.

You prepare a feast for us

in the presence of our enemies.

You welcome us as friends

and lavish your blessings on us.

Even when we walk through difficult valleys,

we will not fear,

for you never are far away—

protecting and comforting,

We know that your goodness and unfailing love

will continue to pursue us all the days of our lives,

and that after our lives here are over,

we will spend eternity in your presence.

May the God of peace—
who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—
may he equip you with all you need
for doing his will.

May he produce in you,
through the power of Jesus Christ,
every good thing that is pleasing to him.
All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

**Breathe your Spirit upon each of us; *your humble Pastor-servant leaders,*
*Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin***