

The Psalm of a Prodigal Prophet

Opening Illustration: Sending a Jew to Nazi Germany

Jonah 1:1-17 (ESV)

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. 4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.” 7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. (disciples when Jesus calmed the sea) 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:39-41 (ESV)

But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Jonah 2:1-10 (ESV)

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, 2 saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. 3 For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' 5 The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. 7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" 10 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Outline / Observations

Jonah's prayer is not a request to be saved from the fish, but is thanksgiving for being saved by the fish.

- Vs. 2 summarizes the prayer – Jonah called and God answered
- 3 – 6 expands on Jonah's cry for help
- 6b – 10 expands on God's answer
- Jonah's prayer describes his near death experience
- Sheol refers to the realm of the dead.
- Jonah declares that God brought him up and out and showed him grace and compassion even though he was willful and radical in his disobedience.
- God will relent when people repent

The Big Idea

Our Heavenly Father is a God of second chances and disobedience leads to discipline.

Thoughts

1. It is better to wrestle with the Lord in prayer than move in willful disobedience.
2. God doesn't want to kill you, but He does want you to die to hate, unforgiveness, selfishness, pride, your will and way...
3. Confession and repentance leads to restoration
4. At this point Jonah's mind is changed about obeying God's Word, but as time will reveal
5. Jonah's heart still had rooted hatred, unforgiveness and prejudice towards his enemies.
6. The Lord wants us to trust Him for His ultimate justice and live the message that changed our lives. God is merciful and kind, full of compassion and wants all to come to repentance.
7. Obedience to God's mission is the path to sanctification. This path is hard b/c He is working us out and His heart into us.
8. God didn't call Moses to kill an Egyptian or into the desert.

9. Our Heavenly Father is faithful to discipline His kids, but this isn't punishment – Jesus took all of that. God has a high calling here to share Himself with us.

Hebrews 12:7-11 (ESV)

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- Jonah had to give up in order to give in to God's plan.
- What about you are you running with God or running from God? Phillip – Acts 8:26-31
- So are you currently running to or from God's heart and mission?
- Ironically they seem to both lead to God's mission – to change our heart and to change the world. The contrast is in the experiences along the way.
- Jonah – Fear, isolation, suicidal and resistance
- Phillip – Purpose, passion and promise
- God used both to reveal Himself to the world.
- Jesus had the ideal attitude towards those who hated and mistreated Him. He gave His life for them. He loved His enemies. Jonah wanted his enemies to suffer and the last thing he wanted was for them to be forgiven.
- Jonah's story demonstrates God's limitless love, boundless compassion and amazing grace.
- God's Way – Obedience – it is the process by which God weeds out the ills, sin, hatred, pain, unforgiveness, chaos, pride, callousness....
- Join God on mission and He will change your heart and your world.
- His path of sacrificial service leads to be more like Him and sharing His heart. BLESS
- As we join God in saving the world we are saved / transformed!
- We see this in the lives of Joseph and Daniel – But it had its challenges for sure. It is interesting that they both became leaders through radical obedience.

Psalm 25:4-5 (ESV)

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Conclusion - It is time to turn to His plan/Way. Throw yourself in, yield to the Father's heart. It led Joseph to Egypt, Phillip to Gaza and Jonah to Nineveh where might it lead you?