

Jonah - Turning to God - Jonah 2:1-10 Devotions

Monday, May 8

Opening thought: think back over the last 6 months of your life. When has your life been spiritually "off track?" (apathetic, passionless, dry; feeling distant from God; in the grip of some besetting sins, etc.)

Read - Jonah 2:1-10

- How does Jonah describe his situation? (Looking at verses 1-8)

- How is God described or mentioned in these verses?

Pastor Jerry pointed out that God, in his mercy, will distress our lives to move us or even drive us to repentance. God's love will never overlook our sin and disobedience. He will, for the child of God, cause us to see our situation crystal clear so that our hearts are moved to repentance and true restoration with God.

- How have you seen this truth in your own life?

2 Corinthians 7:5-10 describes a time when the Apostle Paul had to write a severe letter to the Corinthian church to confront their sin. And their response, as Titus brings news back to Paul, is that they had repented.

- Read these verses and write your own summary of how sorrow (i.e. Godly distress) and repentance work together.

Reflect - God is so wise as to allow situations to arise in our lives that will lead us to see Him more clearly, see our sin more profoundly and learn the joy of returning and repenting to the Lord. Take time this morning to thank God for the challenges, distresses and difficulties that He is using to draw you back to Himself.

- Then listen to this worship song by 10th Avenue North: <https://youtu.be/eBg9jHQe44>

Tuesday, May 9

Opening thought: what comes to mind when you hear the phrase: "they were very merciful" or "they showed a lot of kindness"?

Read - Jonah 2:6-10 & Titus 3:3-7

- How does the Jonah passage describe God as it relates to being merciful or kind?

- How does the Titus passage describe God as it relates to being merciful or kind?

Jonah's situation is amply described in the NT passage Titus 3:3 - his sin of disobedience, hatred of the Ninevites and selfishness fit him well. And yet God's mercy and kindness are present in the sending of the storm and having Jonah swallowed by the great fish. Without these events Jonah would not see his sin and recognize what he is doing. Being confronted with our sin and disobedience is absolutely necessary, not only in first coming to Christ, but in our continual walk as believers.

- How do the following passages show this truth?

--Proverbs 25:12, 27:6

--Ecclesiastes 7:5

--1 Timothy 4:1-4

Reflect - "Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?" (Romans 2:4 NLT) take time to meditate on this verse and what you have seen on scripture this morning. Then turn to God in prayer and respond.

Wednesday, May 10

Opening thought: when you hear pastors talk about "repentance" or "turning back to God" what comes to mind? Why?

Read - Isaiah 30:8-21

- How does God describe the people of Israel in verses 8-11?

- What is surprising about God's words in verses 15-21? What seems unexpected in these verses?

Israel is looking to foreign Egypt rather than Faithful and Trustworthy God for relief, comfort, peace and rest. They seek all that God offers but not through God himself. How true this is of our life as well. When life is not going as we would have it, when difficulties arise, when health fails, when finances dry up...what do we do? Where do we turn? What do we seek?

- How would you answer this? What do you turn to besides God?

Isaiah states that God waits or delays to hear from his people -true repentance, crying out to God, turning to him from your place of sin, disobedience or distress. And He will quickly act to save. But this delay, this waiting on God's part is to lead us to repentance. That we would see that nothing less than fully trusting in God is what is needed. And in repenting we turn from ourselves to obedience.

Reflect - Martin Luther wrote: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance." All of the Christian life is repentance. Turning from sin and trusting in the good news that Jesus saves sinners aren't merely a one-time inaugural experience but the daily substance of Christianity. The gospel is for every day and every moment. Repentance is to be the Christian's continual posture. (Desiringgod.com)

- How is God working in your life to lead you to repentance? Pray about this.

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My Sermon Notes

[Personal note - I love verse 8 -- "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love." Help me to see and know the truth of this verse!]

Chapter 2 is a prayer of Jonah and it reveals that something miraculous is going on inside Jonah. In many ways this chapter is an encouragement to those whose life is "off track."

- spiritual life: apathetic, passionless, dry; I feel distant from God; on-auto pilot; or you are in grip of some besetting sins; you can't move on from sinful actions that have brought horrible results in your life, living with guilt and shame. You've been in a job for a long time and are medicating yourself to get through it; you feel like you are in a pit and cannot get out.
- Chapter 2 shows us there is a way back to God thru repentance
- Chapter 2 is for everyone who isn't where they want to be with God or in Life.

Repenting and turning back to God is often preceded by deep distress

Prepositions - **to** and **from**

- Where are you from?
 - Tells you what's going on
 - Verse 1, 6 notice the references to "from"
 - From the belly of the fish; from the pit
 - Wrapped up in seaweed and gunk inside the belly of the fish; smelly, nasty
 - Spiritually - that God has abandoned him and left him alone; forsaken, darkness
 - I'm here because of the fact that I'm rebelling against God and this place is awful (both physically and spiritually)

Movie - Black Hawk Down

- Rangers fighting their way to the city; man hurt and many are trying to help him but it's clear he is going to die. Jerry watching this movie and starts to cry. Jerry sees faces of other men in the theater who are crying -- many crying. Yet a teen says out loud - "come on, get back to the action" - said because they had no experience with this.
- You may not understand all that is happening in this scene (Jonah) because you are not believer - you need to know that all that is being said here is real.
- God will mercifully distress us to motivate repentance!
 - Q: is God in charge (responsible) of the the events leading up to Jonah being thrown into the fish?
 - Verse 3 - God **is** the cause of him being thrown into the sea (He is the first cause) and the sailors are the second cause.
 - Genesis 45:5-8 -- "And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt."
 - Joseph doesn't deny their sinful actions yet overall God is in charge of all actions. 3 times he states the fact that God is sovereignly in control.
 - Q: is it merciful to have Jonah being in a fish
 - Yes, it is merciful to do this to lead Jonah to repentance
 - 2 Samuel 24:14 "Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."
 - David understood that when God brings distress, it is restrained by his mercy and grace. He trusts in the Lord because he knows the character.
 - Jesus says the same thing -- Revelation 3:19-20 "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

Takeaway Truth

God offers salvation and His steadfast love to all who will turn to Him in repentance and faith.

- in the middle of your misery there is still great hope if we will turn, repent and return to the Lord. Turn to the Lord right where you are.
- 3 days in the belly of the fish -- is he immediately repentant after being unconscious? Is he rebellious for 3 days and then he repents?
 - Many of us would remain in our rebellion for awhile but God will allow us to be in distress until we repent

"The Prayer of Cyrus Brown" - right as you are, right now!

"Salvation is of the Lord" - agreeing with God that his way is the right way; turning away from our own methods of managing of our lives.

- confession and crying out followed by obedience
- This is true repentance; contrition (leads to salvation comes from the Lord)
- Repentance brings true change and obedience

The gospel is here in this passage as it points to Jesus Christ...

- There is one greater than Jonah that was distressed on our behalf, swallowed by death for 3 days
- Yet He did not stay in this grave, but rose again and encourages us to return and repent.