

Sermon, October 2, 2011
“Compassionate Evangelism”, Jonah 3:1-10
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The Books of Prophecy

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, **Jonah**, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Overview of Jonah:

- The prophet Jonah is the likely author; Jonah means “dove”.
- The book is directed to the northern kingdom of Israel.
- Only minor prophet quoted by Jesus (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32).
- The time of the writings are likely sometime in 750’sBC
- Time before Assyria’s conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722BC
- According to some Jewish tradition, Jonah is said to be the dead son of a widow from Zarephath who was raised to life by Elijah (I Kings 17), however there is no basis for such an assumption.
- Miraculous event of being swallowed by the “great fish”
- Two plagues (765 and 759 b.c.) and a solar eclipse (763 b.c.), occurred in Assyria prior to Jonah’s arrival.
- Jonah is mentioned in II Kings 14:25 as being a prophet of God during the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753 BC). Jonah foretold of Jeroboam’s expansion of Israel’s territory under his leadership.
- This was a time of prosperity and wealth in Israel, but spiritual decline.
- Nineveh was the capital of Assyria located in modern day Mosul, Iraq. Archeological finds show the walls of the city to be at least eight miles long.
- Nineveh was known for its cruelty and was an enemy of Israel.
- Nineveh was destroyed in 612BC as prophesied by Nahum.
- **Overall Outline of Jonah:**
 - I. Jonah runs from the LORD (Ch. 1)
 - II. Jonah’s prayer of distress and his salvation (Ch. 2)
 - III. Jonah preaches to Nineveh, Nineveh repents (Ch. 3)
 - IV. Jonah angered by the LORD’s compassion (Ch. 4)

Major Themes of Jonah:

- God’s sovereign rule over all creation.
- God’s demand for obedience, but also the God of second chances
- God’s compassion and mercy to all who repent (not just Israel)
- The mission to proclaim God’s message to the whole world.

The message of Jonah is obey God, repent of your disobedience, and spread the “good news” with a heart of compassion.

1. Jonah hears God’s call to go to Nineveh, but refuses to obey and flees.

- **Jonah 1:1-3** *The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*
- Jonah, the prophet of Israel during Jeroboam II, a man of God, who outright disobeys his LORD.
- When God calls you to do something do not disobey. He is the God of all creation, you will not escape His pursuit. The story of Jonah’s disobedience is almost comical, he seems to forget who he is dealing with.
- Jonah suffered the consequences of his disobedience in a most unusual way. He was thrown overboard in the midst of a stormy sea and was swallowed by a big fish!
- Not only that, he was inside the fish for three days and three nights.
- Jesus refers to Jonah when he talks to the Pharisees regarding their request for a sign...he gives them the sign of Jonah. Son of man 3d3n
- The lesson is: When God asks you to do something...do it!

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2. **The process of doing what God asks after you refuse requires a change of mind (repentance).**
 - **Jonah 2:8-9** ⁸ *“Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, ⁹ But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD.”*
 - Listening and responding to God’s call is going to require a change of heart.
 - You must move from being self-centered to God-centered.
 - Jonah sees the error of his ways and asks God for forgiveness, he repents, changes his mind, moves closer to God’s position, allowing God to rule in his life , taking himself off the thrown...repentance. The very thing he is asked by God to preach to the Ninevites!
 - The lesson two is: repent when you disobey.

3. **God gives Jonah a second chance to be an evangelist to an evil nation.**
 - **Jonah 3:1-3** *The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ² “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” ³ So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.*
 - Jonah has a renewed heart to do what God asks, tell other what you have learned
 - He goes to the great city of Nineveh and preaches eight words in a call to repentance; *“Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”*
 - Jonah is preaching the coming judgment of God and the implication is that unless the people change their hearts and minds judgment will come...repent.
 - Evangelism is sharing/spreading the “good news”. It is delivering a call for repentance, to change your mind, heart, actions **μετανοέω** *metanoeo* to the lost.
 - **Acts 2:38** ³⁸ *Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
 - God used the prophet Jonah to deliver a message of repentance to an enemy of Israel and 120,000 people had a change of heart. They *“All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands.”*
 - Like Jonah to the Ninevites, like Peter to the Roman centurion, like Paul to the Gentiles...take the saving message of Jesus Christ to all people (Acts 1:8) even those you do not like!
 - Lesson three is: take the first two lessons you learned and share it with others!

4. **The Christian heart should evangelize with compassion to the lost.**
 - Even though Jonah delivered God’s message he did so with a joyless, reluctant heart. He was hoping for the destruction of Nineveh and was angered to see that they did indeed repent and God was merciful.
 - **Jonah 3:10 - 4:1** ¹⁰ *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.*
 - God gives Jonah a lesson on compassion for all, even his enemies.
 - **Jonah 4:11** ¹¹ *“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”*
 - Penn Jillette, an avowed atheist, Video (of Penn and Teller) out of respect to a kind man who gave him a Bible said, “How much do you have to hate someone, **not** to share a message you know will save them for eternity?”
 - If God has given you a life-saving gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, are you sharing this glorious message with others?
 - ***The message of Jonah is obey God, repent of your disobedience, and spread the “good news” with a heart of compassion.***