

## Running with God – Preaching

Jonah 3

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • April 7, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2024  
Scripture Reader and Reading: Jackson Meyer – Luke 11.29–30  
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Nash Crisp – No Suggestions

### Prelude:

#### **I. Jonah returned to where he started.**

- A. What had he gained by a bitter experience!
- B. Did it make him a more devoted preacher? Most assuredly.
  - 1. His devotion would have been deeper had he obeyed from the heart first.
  - 2. God did what was necessary to get the erring back.

#### **II. The Book of Jonah shows the graciousness of our Redeemer.**

- A. How many extra chances has the God of heaven given to each of us after our sins?
- B. Would you think on Psalm 103.8–14.

- 8     **The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.**
- 9     **He will not always strive with us,  
Nor will He keep His anger forever.**
- 10    **He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**
- 11    **For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;**
- 12    **As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**
- 13    **As a father pities his children,  
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.**
- 14    **For He knows our frame;  
He remembers that we are dust.**

– Psalm 103.8–14

- 1. Not only were the souls of the Ninevites important to God, but
- 2. the soul of Jonah was important to God.

- a) Since Jonah seemed to be such a problem,
- b) why did the Lord not send someone else?
  - (1) Jonah needed to learn some things
  - (2) just like the Ninevites needed to learn somethings, and
    - (a) that shows God cared for Jonah
    - (b) along with the Ninevites.

### **III. The Lord uses us to minister to another people, but**

- A. he also wants to minister to us, and
- B. the case of Jonah shows that the Lord does not give us up easily.
  - 1. If he would later come down to live among us and then
  - 2. die for us,
    - a) that shows he does not give us up easily.
    - b) He fights for us.

### **IV. Why would the holy God of heaven**

- A. want to show mercy to the wicked Ninevites anyway?
- B. For us as Christians,
  - 1. that is an easy answer.
  - 2. Remember what Peter said:

**9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

**– 2 Peter 3.9**

- 3. And again, the apostle Paul taught:

**3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

– **1 Timothy 2.3–4**

**V. Jonah had a problem.**

- A. He believed that Israel and Israel alone, was the favored people of God.
- B. To Jonah,
  - 1. Israel deserved God's grace, but
  - 2. Nineveh did not.
    - a) However, when you read the Scriptures, and
    - b) I mean when you read the entire Bible,
      - (1) you will discover that God shows mercy to all and
      - (2) desires to show mercy to all,
        - (a) whereas, believing that only your people matter to God
        - (b) denies the very nature of God.

**VI. It seems that Jonah opposes whatever is not Israel.**

- A. Yet, the Lord persuaded him
- B. that he needed to do as told.
  - 1. Therefore, the Book of Jonah opens with God instructing Jonah
  - 2. to go the city of Nineveh and preach what God commands.
    - a) He hates the Ninevites and so runs in the other direction.
    - b) Then through a horrible storm and being swallowed by a great fish,
      - (1) the prophet learned that we cannot disregard
      - (2) what God tells us to do.
        - (a) Therefore, he ran to God in prayer, but
        - (b) found out that God still wanted him to go to Nineveh.

**VII. What we are about to see is**

- A. Jonah preaching to Nineveh,

B. which amounts to an invitation for the Ninevites

1. to receive God's mercy,
2. although in chapter 4, we will find,
  - a) that the whole time he truly did not want them to receive mercy.
  - b) This is ironic because
    - (1) Jonah had received God's mercy
      - (a) when the Lord saved him from drowning, and then
      - (b) when the Lord had the fish vomit Jonah onto the dry land.
    - (2) Yet, he does not want it for others.

### **VIII. What the Book of Jonah has shown us thus far is**

- A. that Jonah when he did not like what God said, but
- B. he ran to God when he needed the Lord.
  1. Now, we will see him running with God, sort of,
  2. by preaching what God told him to preach, but
    - a) "sort of," by hoping
    - b) that his preaching did not take hold.

### **IX. Jonah does not have any misconceptions of the God of heaven and earth.**

- A. He had told the mariners, that his God had created the sea and the dry land.
- B. In his prayer in chapter 2, he spoke everything correctly about God.
- C. Then in chapter 4,

### **X. One more thing that I want to mention before we get into chapter 3.**

- A. The Book of Jonah, especially chapter 3,
- B. shows the awesome power of the word of God.
  1. It has always impressed me
  2. that Jonah was not in anyway
    - a) what we say a person should be to preach.

- b) He did not like the people to whom he would speak.
  - (1) When they appeared to repent,
  - (2) he resented it deeply.
- C. Nevertheless, Jonah declared the word of God to Nineveh.
  - 1. He was a reluctant speaker, and
  - 2. despised the people to whom he spoke.
    - a) Yet, the word of God shined through such a bad prophet and
    - b) the people heard what they needed to hear,
      - (1) leading them to humble themselves before, and
      - (2) to repent of their sins totally.

**Persuasion:**

**I. Jonah 3.1–4 • Running with God by Preaching**

**1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

- A. Jonah ended up right back where he started.
  - 1. How much trouble could he have avoided?
- B. Jonah made the 500-mile journey to Nineveh,
  - 1. all according to the word of the Lord.
- C. The writer sought to give us an idea of the size of Nineveh:
  - 1. It was an exceedingly great city.
  - 2. It was a three-day journey in extent.
    - a) There is a lot of discussion among commentators as to what the writer meant.

- b) Did he mean the diameter of the city, that it took three days to walk from one end to the other?
- c) I am more inclined to say that the writer meant the circumference of the city.
  - (1) Imagine a city so large
  - (2) that it would take three, 20-mile days to walk around it!

D. There is a hint in the New Testament

- 1. that might reveal more about Jonah's message.
- 2. Perhaps the writer simply summarized Jonah's message, or
  - a) it truly was that short.
  - b) Seeing a Jew proclaim this message,
    - (1) actually going to their city,
    - (2) in itself sent a message to the Ninevites.
- 3. In Luke 11,
  - a) Jesus indicated that the Ninevites somehow knew of Jonah's experience in the great fish.

**29 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, “This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. 30 For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.”**

– Luke 11.29–30

- b) How did they know of his adventure?
  - (1) He may have told them everything
  - (2) that we read in the first two chapters of Jonah.
- c) And they believed him.
  - (1) Assyria, and its capital, Nineveh, knew Israel, and
  - (2) they knew of Israel's God.

- (a) The Ninevites would have thought of Israel
  - (b) the same way that Israel thought of Nineveh.
    - i) Therefore, for a prophet to go to their nation, and
    - ii) having that prophet explain how he did not want to go there,
      - (1) I think added to the truth or prophetic nature of Jonah's message,
      - (2) that the God of Israel really would overthrow Nineveh.
4. The Lord of heaven and earth showed Nineveh,
- a) that wicked and violent-loving nation, grace
  - b) by giving them 40-days notice,
    - (1) 40 days before he would overthrow the city.
    - (2) What would the Ninevites do?
      - (a) Forty days occurs often in Scripture.
- E. However, focus upon what turned these people.
- 1. It was a message of impending destruction.
  - 2. Sometimes we think that we have to nice people into the church, but
    - a) they will not see their need for a Savior
    - b) until they see that they are sinners.
      - (1) His message must have contained more than
      - (2) simply saying that in 40 days Nineveh would be overthrown.
        - (a) They knew to turn to God,
        - (b) although Jonah did not mention God,
          - i) if verse 4 is the entirety of his message.
          - ii) I am of the opinion
            - (1) that the words, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,"
            - (2) summarize or give the main part of the message.

## II. Jonah 3.5–9 • The Power of God's Word

**5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?**

A. What an irony, a people whom a man of God,

1. believed God,
2. proclaimed a fast, and
3. put on sackcloth.
  - a) Should that not have been Jonah?
  - b) Yes, he prayed to God.
    - (1) That was good.
    - (2) However, did he recognize that what the Ninevites did was good?
      - (a) It was as though they should have preached to him.
      - (b) How can a child of God become so hard-hearted?

B. Even the king of Nineveh humbled himself.

1. He wanted everyone to fast,
2. including animals,
  - a) meaning that not only would they refrain from food, but
  - b) he did not even want them drinking water.

C. He wanted all his citizens

1. to cry mightily to God and
2. to turn away from their evil, naming violence in particular.

D. He had hope

1. that God would turn away from making Nineveh perish.
2. Will we see that king in heaven?
  - a) Will we see his people up there?
  - b) I would assume so,
    - (1) unless their repentance did not last.
    - (2) How many other people
      - (a) from throughout history,
      - (b) whom we thought could not possibly make it,
        - i) will actually make it?
        - ii) Is the reverse also true?

E. It is interesting that the king referred to one God,

1. which would be the God of Jonah,
2. rather than the many gods of the Assyrian Empire.

F. Sometimes things and people change when you least expect it.

1. Was there anyone in Israel who had hope of Nineveh repenting?
2. We cannot underestimate
  - a) the divine power of the preaching of the pure word of God.
  - b) Granted, he designed his word to be absorbed by willing hearts.

**III. Jonah 3.10 • God Held Back the Disaster**

**10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.**

- A. Praise God!
- B. Imagine the whole Islamic city of Tehran, Iran turning to God.
  1. Would that not be great?

2. Is that not what we want to see?
  - a) It can happen through the full declaration
  - b) of the power of the word of God,
    - (1) showing people the goodness and severity of God, and
    - (2) not a watering-down of the message that gives only the positives.

**Exhortation:**

**I. I cannot say**

- A. 40 days and
- B. we shall all appear before God at the Judgment.
  1. I cannot say that it will happen in 40 days.
  2. However, I can say
    - a) that we all shall appear before God.
    - b) King Solomon revealed
      - (1) what is the most important thing in life, and
      - (2) he also revealed why it is the most important thing in life:

**13            Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:**

**Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.**

**14            For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil.**

**– Ecclesiastes 12.13–14**

**II. Are you doing somethings that you know you should not be doing?**

- A. It will come up at the Judgment.
- B. This is why Jesus is so crucial.

**III. He can forgive you of all that you have done wrong...**