

RECAP: This past week, we began our new series walking through the book of Jonah and in it, we saw and will continue to see various truths about who God is and how God works for our good and His glory... to put it in a statement, we said this book shows us, ultimately, how a **Great God goes to Great Lengths to show His Great Mercy...** and all of this is seen on the backdrop of one man and his wild journey... Specifically last week, we were introduced to this prophet named Jonah who was called by God to go to the wicked city of Nineveh to call out against it, to let them know that their sinfulness was about to be rewarded with destruction, God's judgment was about to be poured out on them... However, instead Jonah runs, but as we saw, he did not run from the call to go to Nineveh as much as he ran from the very presence of the Lord... thus, began this downward disobedient descent for Jonah... Amidst Jonah's continual disobedience though, we were confronted with the great **mercy** and **grace** of God... despite Jonah's fleeing, God still wanted to use him to carry out His plan... think how many times God could have easily given up on Jonah, decided to go with someone else to send to Nineveh, but God was determined to use Jonah in that plan, even if it meant Jonah was going to continually fight it the whole way, even if it meant Jonah was going to still be trying to run from God the entire time...

- We also saw, though, the sovereignty of God... Despite all that was going on in God's creation, this pure chaos, if you will, that was taking place, God was firmly and securely over all and above all and God was working and fashioning everything in His creation to carry out His will... from the storm to the sailors' lots to the big fish... notice all the moving parts in this story are not a result of sheer chance, luck, or coincidence, but they were all integral and essential parts of God's plan as a result of His sovereignty... God's sovereignty was on full display, and despite all that Jonah did and tried, he could not shake God from intricately working and carrying out His plan in His creation
- Ultimately, we came around this main idea last week... **God's grace, mercy, & pursuit is greater than our rebellion & sin...** We saw that no matter what we do, we cannot outrun a God who is everywhere; we cannot find a way around a God who is determined to use us and that is true because of the grace and mercy of God that continually chases us down and pursues us despite our continual running from Him... Think how many times Jonah thought he had outsmarted God or outrun God... Think about when he got on a boat going the opposite way of Nineveh, think about when the sailors threw him overboard and he thought he was going to die... but it was God who continually chased down Jonah and pursued him because He wanted him to be a part of His plan, and the beautiful thing is, He does the same with us, He wants to incorporate

us and involve us in what He is doing and carrying out in His creation, but why? Why would a God desire for us, a broken people, to help Him in His plans here on Earth? (Ex: I'm sure many of us in the room grew up with dad's who liked to work on cars and for many of us, when we were younger, we often had one key responsibility, one crucial task that every kid has: holding the flashlight for your dad as he worked on the car... Is it because you had a unique ability to hold the flashlight? Was it that you had some profound gift to hold the flashlight better than anyone? Now, why did we do that? Why would your dad get you to help him?... Because there is something special when your father can bring you into what he is working on and allow you to be a part of it; it stems from his love for you and his desire to have you there with him)... God's grace, mercy, & pursuit is far greater than our rebellion and sin

- As we come to Jonah 2 this morning, there's a few things we should take note of:
 1. First, this is a differently structured section than we saw last week and what we will see the next couple weeks... it is Jonah's prayer, there is no real storyline that takes place in these first 9 verses until you get to the very last verse of this chapter... Jonah has been in the belly of this fish for these 3 days now, and it is now, we get to hear Jonah's first conversation with the Lord since he started running back in the beginning of chapter 1... notice, it was the word of the Lord that came to Jonah in ch.1, v. 1 and immediately, Jonah started running... so, this is the first time Jonah is forced to finally look back to and acknowledge God since his running began... so we recognize that it a different section, that it is Jonah's first acknowledgment of the Lord, his prayer, and we do this so that we can read it rightly and hopefully understand what God is wanting to communicate to us through this section
 2. Secondly and lastly, we have to remember all that transpired and took place in chapter 1... this is essential because if you read this out of context on its own, you can get an entirely different idea about this chapter

READ Jonah 2

- As I was reading and preparing for this message this week, I came across a description that I think fits very well with what we are going to see this morning... (A man said: "I look at this like I do a three-quarters-inch snowfall on a garbage dump. It looks beautiful

until you begin to stir around a little.”)... Why do I bring this up? Why do I begin our study this morning with such an illustration? Because I think this very accurately describes what we see here with Jonah and his prayer to God... as we will see, it is a very elaborate prayer that is filled with wording and language that we would peg with any good, Godly prayer... You may even sit there and believe that this is a very moving, very repentant prayer to God on Jonah's part, that he has experienced all of this, he's run so much from God and now he has finally recognized what he's done, he's exhausted all of his efforts if you will, and he's turning over a new leaf, he's undergone a heart change... so then what's the problem? Why do we compare Jonah's prayer here to snow on a garbage dump?

- This is why it is important to remember the context of Jonah 1, as well as to see what happens following... As we have seen and as we will see over the coming weeks, I am going to argue this morning that this is not a prayer of true repentance on the part of Jonah, he has not undergone this profound transformation, because his actions following this moment prove that nothing really has changed (**read ch.4, v. 1-3**)... no, this was a prayer here in chapter 2, I feel, that came because Jonah realized he could not escape God... Jonah in chapter 1 was fully convinced that when he fled to Tarshish, hopped on the boat, and even when the sailors tossed him overboard, he thought, in all of them, there was no way that God was going to be able to use him to carry out his plan, he was either gonna outrun God or die in the process and either way was fine with Jonah, but now, after three days in the belly of this fish, Jonah finally recognizes that God has him and God was going to continue to hold him until Jonah finally submitted to Him, even if he didn't fully believe it (ex: Now, many this morning are parents in the room and I'm sure you've had this situation happen in your life as a parent: you tell your child to go tell their brother or sister they're sorry after they've done something wrong... so they go and say it, but do they really mean it? No, oftentimes, that's why you've gotta say what? Say it again and say it like you mean it)... so, he begins praying to the Lord, but I feel it's not so much out of his recognizing his disobedience and wanting to repent as it is his realizing that this is his only way out... Jonah here, I feel, is "saying sorry," he's saying the right words, but it lacks the heart behind them
- Notice also, Jonah is recounting and referencing old testament passages throughout nearly the entirety of his prayer... which, me and Chris hit on this truth as we were looking at this passage, "when you don't know what to say to God, which Jonah surely wouldn't have after everything that happened in chapter 1, say what you know about

God" ... so the problem is not that he is saying the wrong things, the problem is does he believe what he is saying? Is it here an "I'm sorry with meaning" or an "I'm sorry because I have to" ... Based on what transpires after this, as we saw in ch. 4, I would argue it's the latter, but regardless of which you may feel is right, which both sides are heavily debated and neither is backed with certainty, this is still a passage with rich truths for us that we can take and apply to our own lives now

- So, this morning, as we've said, we pick up with Jonah in a very peculiar state... he has just been swallowed up by the big fish in v. 17 of chapter 1 and he has been in this fish's belly for 3 days and 3 nights... and as any person that has been trapped in the belly of fish would testify and agree with, this was certainly Jonah's lowest point; it simply doesn't get lower or worse than this
- Notice, though, that it makes this point twice... look at v. 17 of chapter 1 - "... and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three night." Now, look at the very next verse, v. 1 of chapter 2 - "Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from where? From the belly of the fish"... why is this mentioned twice? Like, we get it man, we know exactly where you are... so why is this said? Is it because Jonah is trying to brag and say, "Yeah guys, look where I'm at" ... that's doubtful because who would wanna brag about this, about being here... no, this is repeated because it's important... This is a key point about the Bible, anytime something is repeated more than once, take note of it because it is important... so this is important for us because as we have said, this is Jonah's lowest point to date, and him being in this low state forces him, now, to see that God has him and thus he is confronted with some truths of God

Main Idea: It is in our lowest points where we are forced to both recognize and wrestle with the truths of who God is

You might ask yourself why are we focusing on what we can know about God in this section? Isn't this a portion detailing Jonah's prayer, so why are we looking at these truths of who God is? We look at the truths of who God is because that is the only thing that is constant and sure in this story. We see the curves of Jonah's life are pitted against the consistency of God; Jonah since this story has begun has been an up and down roller coaster, but despite all that has transpired and taken place, GOD HAS STAYED THE SAME THROUGH IT ALL - HE HAS REMAINED CONSTANT... In fact, through this passage, we see that we are left more confused about Jonah, but we can be more confident in God

So then what are these truths that Jonah recognizes and ultimately struggles with and that we too should know that can in turn grant us confidence about God?

Jonah is confronted with and forced to recognize a few truths about God:

1. God is a God who Hears (v. 1-2)

- Despite all that Jonah has done, despite all the running from God, the disobeying His commands, the turning his back on Him, the flat out rejection of Him, Jonah recognizes and knows that God still hears him and his cries to Him
- This is important for us because the truth is there is not a moment in our lives here on Earth where our cries don't make it to the feet of our Father; He hears you
- Now, many of us know this truth, we understand that of course God hears us, so why bring this up? Why is this important to mention? Because the circumstances of our lives, the situations we will find ourselves in, will try to tell us something different
- We talked about this a little with the CREW a couple of weeks ago, but what is Satan's greatest tactic he uses against you? What is his most effective attack against you? It can simply be summed up as doubt... think back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3... how did Satan, disguised as a serpent, get Eve to take of the fruit and eat it? He caused her to doubt God
- Genesis 3:1 - "He said to the woman, 'Did God **really** say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'" (causing her to question if that's really what God said)
- Genesis 3:4-5 - "No! You will not die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (causing her to question the very character of God, does he have my best interest, my good, at heart?)
- Why is this? Why is doubt Satan's go to tactic? Because Satan knows the power of a person that believes and does not doubt... he recognizes that those that put their faith in God and trust Him with their lives have unmatched power in this life and he is simply no match against it, so what does he do? He tries to get you to doubt God because he knows that's the only way he can win...

- Ex: if you decide to come at me with your car, like you are gonna try and run me over, can I face a fast-moving car head on? No, how can I succeed though? I can drain all the gas out of the car before you come charging at me; it takes away any power, any fuel that you may have to do anything... by causing us to doubt, Satan does the same thing to us and robs us of our power, and thus, by doing so, he can prevail against us; however, when we stick to our power source and make the decision to fight off doubt, Satan has no chance
- So in regards to this passage, we see Satan uses difficult circumstances and hard situations in your life, oftentimes, to stir up in you feelings of doubt toward God... think back to Jonah... **look at v. 1-2 (read)**
- V. 2 - "I called to the Lord in my **distress**"
- "I cried out for help from deep inside **Sheol**" (Sheol = "the abode of the dead")
- So, we see that Jonah recognizes that God hears him, regardless of the circumstances he finds himself in or, get this, the circumstances that Jonah gets in because of what Jonah has done against God, how he has disobeyed, how he has rebelled, how he has rejected him, Jonah sees that he doesn't have to doubt if God hears his cries because he knows that God is still a God who hears... this is a beautiful truth for us, that God, the creator of all things, hears us and there is nothing that should cause us to doubt that truth

2. God is a God who Intervenes (v. 3-6)

- Not only is there a promised truth here that God hears, but there is also a truth that God intervenes, that God steps in, that God acts on your behalf
- It's one thing for God to hear us but if God never were to do anything with our cries, if He were just to put them in a Heavenly drawer and forget about them, what good would that do? No, God is not only a God who hears, but He is also a God who intervenes
- Jonah recognizes this... **look at v. 3-6 (READ)**
- As all of these waves begin to surround and overwhelm Jonah, it was the Lord who stepped in and raised his life from the Pit
- Listen, what I am not saying is that when storms come in your life and you pray to God, He will bring you immediately out of them and rid your life of any difficulty or pain... because look at v. 3 - "**You** threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas, and the current overcame me..." sometimes it's the Lord that

brings about intervention in your life **through** storms or challenges... So no, what I am hoping to show you is something even greater than God simply removing from us any trouble or difficulty in our life, no rather, the greater truth is that despite what is going on in your life, despite the storms that are raging, God is always right there... notice v. 4

- V. 4 - "But I said, 'I have been banished from your sight, yet I will look once more toward your holy temple'"... Jonah recognizes, in the midst of his trial and difficult situation, that he can look to this "holy temple," to the presence of God, because it was God who was present with him"
- God, in his infinite grace and mercy, chooses to continually look down on us and step in and fight for us despite how many times we turn away from Him or sin against Him... God is always there leading you through your storm
- How, though Jordan, does God intervene in my life even though I am still walking through this valley I'm facing? Where I am still going through this hardship in my life? How am I to believe that God actually hears and intervenes for me? How do I know that?
- I say this because there is perhaps no greater act of intercession for you or for me or for anyone else in the history of this world than the picture of the cross... It was on that cross that Christ made the ultimate intercession for you and me, seeing our lack of hope apart from Him, seeing our disobedience and sin separating us from a holy God, seeing the difficult situation that we were in, and thus choosing to step in to offer up His life as an offering for you and for me... don't tell me you don't know if God can intervene or intercede for you when He has done the most complete, the largest, the most satisfying act of intercession He could possibly do... and if He was willing to do that, what isn't He willing to do now?... we can have hope because we can know that we have a God who not only hears but who also has and continues to intervene for you... just continue to trust Him

3. God is a God who Saves (v. 7-9)

- Perhaps the most crucial part of this entire section lies in this next point... God is a God who saves
- **V. 7-9 (READ)**
- Here, Jonah utters the one thing that kept him from going to Nineveh, the one thing that he knew about God that made him flee from His very presence... We

wondered at the beginning why would a man who hated Nineveh fight so hard not to go and preach judgment against it? And it is found all in this point... He knew that salvation belonged to the Lord and he knew that God was set on saving the city of Nineveh

- It's funny as we sit and think about this, that Jonah is offering up this prayer in the belly of the fish, why? Because he knows that that is the only way he's getting out of this fish, he is realizing now that there is no other way, and thus he wants God to save him from this, but he doesn't want God to save the Ninevites... Jonah wanted an exclusive salvation, one that was limited to him and the ones he approved of, and it all comes around this point... he didn't see himself as as bad as the Ninevites; he thought he was better, more godly, more fit to be saved than these heathens in Nineveh
- However, the truth of the matter is that God longs and desires to save everyone... there is no one so far gone that is excluded from the salvation of God and God thus desires for all of them to come to know Him
- What Jonah had been harboring and dwelling on for so long now, finally comes out in this prayer, and notice then what happens in v. 10?
- "Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land"
- Me and Chris were talking as I was working on this and we can't definitively prove this, but we feel that it is a reasonable assumption to assume that as soon as Jonah said this, as soon as he uttered these words and finally recognized this truth, it was then that God ordered the fish to vomit him up
- Then, notice chapter 3, v. 1... what happens next? "The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time..."
- The call had not changed, God still was set on bringing salvation to the Ninevites and now Jonah was seeing that, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't keep God from doing so; God was set on saving this people
- I think there is a very fitting quote that aligns with all we have seen this morning, in regards to the Ninevites, in regards to Jonah, and even in regards to us, and it is this Spurgeon quote...
- "Think not of the sinner or the greatness of his sin, but think of the greatness of the Savior." (Spurgeon)
- Regardless if you see others as very ungodly or even view yourself as too unworthy, the point we remember and focus on hinges and centers on the

“greatness of the Savior” alone... we all need the salvation that only this Savior can provide... so the question becomes what is stopping you from believing that and then sharing that because this is a truth that should radically change everything about our lives

- Jonah here had ultimately reached a point where he realized he couldn't run from God anymore; God had him; God had driven him to a place where he simply couldn't escape... when we reach that point where we know that there's nothing else we can do, where we've exhausted all our efforts running from God and avoiding His calling on our lives, there are two things that happen and these are going to serve as our two points of application:

1. **We recognize it...** we all are forced to one day acknowledge it; we all will reach this point where we are forced to see that God is far greater than us, far above us, far over us, and no matter what we can do, we see and understand that there is nothing we can do to outrun Him, outsmart Him, outwit Him, overpower Him, outman Him... we ultimately see who God is and thus in turn see rightly who we are
2. **We wrestle with it...** It is one thing to recognize it, to acknowledge it, to see rightly who God is and who we are, but the second part of that is we all then must respond to it... will we continue to try and fight against it, continuing to try and oppose God and trust in our efforts? OR will we submit to it, seeing our weakness and frailty as no match for God and rather commit ourselves and our lives to following and obeying Him? This is the place we all have found ourselves or will find ourselves one day and this is the exact place where Jonah finds himself here... recognizing requires a response... so what is your response to this God today?

HEADS BOWED:

- Today, we were met with and confronted with some truths about who God is... God is a God who hears, God is a God who intervenes, and God is a God who saves... These truths of God that we spoke about today are unchanging; they are constant and sure, so then the only thing that can change is us... Are we willing to let our recognition of who God is and the truths that make Him up shape how we view God? Where we ultimately see God rightly, see that He is far above us and over us and He is working and carrying out a plan

in our lives and in His creation that, as it says in Habakkuk, we couldn't believe even if He told us... Will we then allow that view of God then to shape how we view ourselves? Seeing us as needy people, as children completely reliant and dependent upon their Father... We must come around a proper view of God because if we fail there, then everything else in our lives will be off as well; how we view and recognize God forms the foundation on which we will build our lives, and it must be right... However, and perhaps most importantly, we all then have to respond to that acknowledgement, to that recognition, how will you wrestle with the truth of who God is... Jonah was confronted with and recognized these same truths, yet that recognition must be met with a response... will that response be one that pushes you further away, as you continually strive to trust in your own abilities and efforts, continuously running from God's call in your life, striving to flee the very presence of the Lord, or will you give in to it, submit to it, and then follow this God with your lives? Maybe that response is to finally believe in Him with your life, to submit to his call of salvation and give your life to the Lord... if that's the case, we'd love to walk through that process with you... however, maybe your response is simply to daily walk closer with Him, trusting Him deeper, clinging to Him tighter as you encounter difficult circumstances or storms in your life... maybe it's to stop putting your faith in and trusting yourself and what you can do and submit to the One who can do all, allowing Him to then work in and use your life for our good and His glory... Whichever it may be, we all have a response because we all are forced to wrestle with the truths of who God is, the question then is: what will you do? How will you respond to the Lord today?

- "Father..." (end in prayer)