

Jonah
Part 2: Rearranged By Grace
2:1-10
4.14.2013

I have 3 quick announcements. **First**, we are voting in new members this month on the 28th. If you'd like to join or learn about that, please visit connections or email us or call. And we will get that going.

Second, **pictures**. If you're a member, please get your picture taken. Fill the card out first, then go by Connections for that. Two **rules**: Be a member. Smile.

Third, I still need your need you **questions**. We've gotten 9 so far. 1 is my mom's. So 8. They are good though. So any questions on doctrine, on Metro East, on theology, on some hot topic, its open game. Just be nice and concise. Go online, UASKED.

Jonah.

John Newton wrote "*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.*" That is what **Jonah is doing here**. He is singing, praying, recounting, God's grace to him.

Let me recap. In chapter 1 God says to go Nineveh and preach against it. But Jonah sails to Tarshish. So God sends a storm. The sailors panic. And Jonah says "*Hurl me in.*" They do. The winds calm. And God appoints a fish to swallow up Jonah and save him. **Now** we see him in the fish, singing/praying to God for saving him.

This is a picture of salvation. Jonah was sinking, dying, drowning, dead, but God raised him up. God rescued him. **Grace rearranged his heart.** We see here repentance, faith, trust, worship, obedience. And I said last week **I am Jonah.** You are Jonah. We ran from God. We sinned. We fled to Tarshish. We were hopeless, sinking, dead. But God rescued us. He came and got us. His Son died for us and rose again, and lavished grace on us and saved us.

Now my **question** is this: **what does that mean?** Or: **what do you saved people do?** How do they think? What are Christians? What does that mean? 3 things: Those rescued by grace:
Move toward God.
They know despair without God.
They hope only in God.

That is what Jonah does here. Its what you should do and I should do. Now if you're **new in church or not a Christian**, listen carefully here. This is what being Christian means.

First, They move toward God.

Verse 1 ***Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish . . .*** So Jonah is in the fish, praying. And look at verse 2 ***saying, I called out (past tense) to the Lord, out of my***

distress, and he answered me. . . So Jonah is praying, about his prayers. He called out to God. God heard him and rescued him. Now when was that? When did Jonah call out to God? Well apparently, when he was sinking. The sailors hurled him in, he went down, and prayed. Look at **3 For you cast me in the deep. . . 5 The waters closed in over me. . . 7When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you.** . . So he went down, the waters closed in, and he prayed to God and God saved him.

Now he is **recounting** and rehearsing that. But you might've noticed, every word in **verses 2-9** is found somewhere else in Scripture. Do you know where? The **Psalms**. Every noun, adjective, verb, pronoun, adverb, is found in the Psalms. Psalm 16, 18, 31, 42, 84, 88, 139. Jonah is singing Psalms to God. He is praising, recounting, remembering, extolling, magnifying, exalting God here, through song. What is the **fish thinking?** His food is singing!

My point is this: **Saved people sing.** There is a song in their hearts, praise in their mouths. They sing to God. I can't sing. I just can't. My wife mocks me. But I love to sing about God's grace and power and love and mercy and wrath.

Music and song is central to life. Atheists and skeptics and agnostics and Jews and Christians and Muslims and Hindu's and rich and poor and black and white and Ford and Chevy and Mac and PC, all sing. Everyone loves music, of some kind. Maybe its rock or metal or country or rap or reggae or pop. We spend billions on concerts and iTunes and albums and T-shirts and reality TV shows. We love music. **Why is that? God made us to sing. God made us to worship.** And praise and song and music expresses that.

So at concerts or in their car or in a stadium, people close their eyes, lift their hands, and immerse themselves in music and song and rhyme and rhythm. We were made for it.

C.S. Lewis said "*The world rings with praise. Their is praise of lovers, the countryside, a favorite game. There is praise of weather, wines, dishes, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical persons, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians. . .*" And he said, "*men urge us to join them in praising it: 'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?'*" "*Praise completes our enjoyment, it is its appointed consummation.*" Then he says this "*The worthier the object, the more intense this delight should be.*" (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 95).

See if you **aren't** a **Christian**, the music you love, whatever genre, and all the emotions and delight and praise and joy and adrenaline, points to something. It echoes the Ultimate Song and the most worthy object to praise, the God who made you. You long to praise and sing to and delight and treasure Him. If you are a Christian, is there is **song in your heart and your mouth?** **Martin Luther** said "*I don't trust theologians who don't sing.*"

Look at verse **9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you** . . .Jonah is thankful, grateful. The Gospel makes you grateful. You relax in God's sovereign goodness and grace. We

should sing of that. I get, there are **seasons where pain and despair** and hurt sets in. But in those times, you need to sing. Through tears and despair. Singing keeps you from idolatry.

The **greatest hymns**, *It Is Well, A Mighty Fortress, Amazing Grace, There Is A Fountain*, were written in seasons of intense and painful suffering. The book **Lamentations**, in the Bible, is a suffering song. Judah was destroyed and exiled to Babylon. That book is a song of lament. But it is so poetic and thoughtful and precise and descriptive and graphic. Singing is good, especially in suffering.

So why do we sing in church? **Bob Kaughlin**, who is a musician, song writer, worship leader, preached on singing once. It was tremendous. He said singing does three things.

First, singing helps us remember words.

Melodies, repetition, rhyme, those are mnemonic tools for memory. Moses did this. The Psalms do this. Judges have songs. They recounted the words and deeds of God. Paul said in **Colossians 3:16** “*Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. . .* Songs recall and rehearse the Gospel, the word of Christ. Singing drives the word home. So here, we sing the Gospel. Look at your sheet on **When Trials Come**. That is Gospel language. That prompts us to remember Christ and what he’s done.

Second, singing helps us engage emotionally with words. Reverence, joy, love, awe, grief, celebration, are emotions we feel in singing. Certain keys and rhythms and repetition bring these out. For example, *It Is Well*. We sing It is well, it is well, it is well, with my soul. We don’t talk like that! How’s it going: *Its well, well, well, with my soul*. But we sing that. Our emotions engage in song. Its okay to be emotional singing. You should be!

Now I’ve been asked here, “*Can we **raise our hands in worship?***” Is it legal? Yes. We don’t write tickets for hand-raisers. Just don’t flail. Don’t bring a flag. Don’t run around. Just pick a posture. But sing, worship, engage.

Third, singing expresses our unity.

The Gospel unites us. Singing together expresses that. We are saying and reciting and rehearsing the same things. We believe this. We rejoice in these doctrines and truths and realities. So when you sing, listen for each other. Don't be so private and closed off. Tune in to others, when you sing. **Instruments** are biblical and important, but they serve the voices, which serves the Gospel.

Revelation 5, says every tribe and tongue and nation and language, have one song “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.*”

So sing. Learn the new songs. Appreciate different styles and traditions of songs. Don’t mistake **nostalgia** for worship. Be **patient** when you don’t know or like a song.

Jonah is singing to the God who saved him. Do you have a song? Has the **Gospel freed you** to sing? Or, is life dull and boring and a dread to you. When God saves you, He brings peace and joy and thanksgiving and hope and playfulness and anxiety free living. **Philippians 4:4** in KJV says *“Rejoice always. Be careful for nothing.”*

Second, they despair without God.

Jonah is very graphic and detailed about his condition. Lets look at what he said. Verse 2 ***out of the belly of Sheol I cried.*** Sheol was the place of the dead, the lowest place in the earth. Verse 4 ***Then I said, I am driven away from your sight.*** . . God’s eye, God’s face, his blessing, presence, was gone from him. 5 ***the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head.*** . . That is burial language. ***I went down to the land whose bars (prison) closed upon me forever.*** In short, he was dead. Without God, Jonah was dead. He was in despair. He is looking back at how desperate and broken and dead his life was.

See when you find or when God finds you, you see how lost you were without Him. He see how futile and vain and worthless life was without God. **Ephesians 2** says we were dead in our sins. We couldn’t move. We were a corpse. We lived in Sheol. We had no hope and joy and life without God.

Now many of you **were saved early.** You’re first word was *Leviticus*. You came to Christ at 6, 8, 9. You had no deep, dark, scandalous, past. You can still praise grace. You can still lament and mourn life without God. You know why? Because, **you know what it cost Him.** It took **Christ dying** to save you. God gave everything. I *love this church*, I do. But you can’t have **my sons**. They aren’t dying for you. You can babysit. But they ain’t dying for you. Yet God willing, freely, dare I say joyfully, gave his son for you.

I mentioned singing. We sing, but God also sings. Zephaniah 3:17 ***The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.***” God sings over us. He is not some reluctant, second-guessing, begrudging savior. He delighted to save you. He wanted to save you. He rejoiced in saving you! He gave everything to do it. He’s never regretted it. He knew how **dark** and **sinful** you’d still be, but he saved you anyway! He would do it again 10,000 times! He wanted you.

Grace can be amazing to you.

Now what is grace? Grace is an undeserved gift, from a non-obligated giver. **Marytn Lloyd Jones** said, “It shouldn’t amaze us, that so few are saved. It should amaze us, that anyone is saved.” We didn’t deserve or want or desire grace, but God, who owed nothing to us, lavished it on us. Jonah didn’t deserve grace. He ran from His God. But God ran to him. And he ran to you.

Now notice here, that **Jonah prays to God**. He says in verse 1 *I called out to the Lord*. Verse 2 *you heard my voice*. Verse 7 *my prayer came to you*. He was in despair and repented. **This could be you**. You're in despair. Life feels like **prison**, like death. There is no joy and no peace in your life. You just watch **TV**. Surf the **web** mindlessly. Eat and drink too much. **Something is missing**. Maybe your **hopes** have been **shattered**. A career or relationship or a scholarship or health or finances fell through. You are panicking. You are despairing at life. **Will you call out to God?** Will you let pain and despair drive you to Him? Your despair is God's grace to you. He is saving you from eternal despair, in hell.

He will hear. He will answer. Look at **verse 6 yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God**. In chapter **1:2** God said "*Arise, go to Nineveh.*" But Jonah went down to Joppa, down in the ship, down to sleep, then down the depths. But God brought Him up. He will bring you up. And if He has, you know how glorious and gracious and merciful he is.

Third, they hope only in God.

They don't trust in idols and other gods and other possessions and people. Look at verse 8 *Those who pay regard (keep, hold onto) vain idols (Eccl language), forsake their hope of steadfast love.*

Now, the question here is: who is Jonah talking about? Who pays **regard to vain idols**? Well the **Ninevites** do. The **sailors** in chapter 1 did. So its them. But its also Jonah. He mentions here **steadfast love**. That is covenant language. Israel language. Jonah is saying "*I've regarded vain idols. I've been idolatrous!*"

Last week I said this: **It is possible to sin without sinning**. That was somewhat provocative and a kind of hook to grab you. Some of you asked me "*What does that mean?*" Who was confused by that? Okay, it wasn't clear. What I meant was: ***you can be very moral and have good theology but miss God***. Look at chapter **1:9**. Jonah is running from God and saying "*I fear Him* (moral, religious, worship language). *He made all things* (theological, creedal language)." You can **believe** the right things and **do** the right things, but beneath the surface, you can trust and pay regard to, and go after other gods. Something else has your heart and your trust.

Let me ask you a few questions:

What can't you live without?

What are you envious of that others have that you don't?

What worrying about losing?

What are you bitter about having lost?

What is the one thing that you say, "*Without this, life isn't worth living*"?

What brings the greatest source of comfort to you?

Where do you turn when life gets tough?

What is the proudest thing in your life?

Maybe its your **image**. You carefully edit and manage your words to appear intelligent, wise, innocent. Looking bad frustrates you. Maybe its being **right** or **winning** or **advancing** or always **going up**. And when you lose, or plateau or stall, it rattles you. We all have these. But **verse 9** says, ***Salvation belongs to the LORD!*** He saves. He is your trust. He is your hope. Press into Him. Rely Him. Enjoy Him. Rest in Him.

So Jonah moved toward God, he knew despair without God, and he hoped only in God.

Now let me close by asking: **why did God hear Jonah?** How did Jonah's prayer get to Him? Look at **verse 4** ***yet I shall again look, upon your holy temple. Verse 7 prayer came to you, into your holy temple.*** What's in the temple? God's glory. God's presence. The arc maybe. But **sacrifices** take place there. Blood is spilled there for forgiveness and atonement and mercy. That is why God heard him. And its why God hears us. His Son was sacrificed. His Son bled and died for us. He took our place on the Cross. He went in the pit, down to Sheol. His life did waste away. He was in the grave. But God raised Him. And raised you with Him.

Frodo said to Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, "*Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.*" Jesus Christ lost everything, to save you.