

We are in Jonah. Very popular story. Let me recap a bit.

**Jonah 1:** God says go to . . . 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 Jonah and save him.

**Jonah 2:** Jonah sings to God inside the fish and recounts God’s mercy and grace and goodness to him. **2:10** the fish vomits Jonah out on the dry land.

**Jonah 3:** Jonah gets a mulligan. That’s a golf term. A second chance. Verse 1, God spoke *a second time*. And Jonah goes and preaches and the whole city repents.

Now, we have not asked yet (on purpose): **Who is this book for?** Who is reading or hearing this book, this story? Not Nineveh. Not Jonah. Not the fish. Not God. But Israel. God’s loved, chosen, elected, freed people. *So what is the message? They are Jonah. Israel is Jonah.* See that? **Why did God save Israel?** To bless the nations. To be a holy and priestly light to the nations. God chose one nation, to bless all nations. God wants the nations, not just Israel. God wants Nineveh.

**And Jonah is Israel’s heart writ small.** His *reluctance* and *stubbornness* to go, is a picture, of their reluctance and stubbornness. That is the point here. God is blessing and saving and wanting the nations. Read the **Psalms**. God wants and deserves and demands global worship, not just local worship.

So how does it work? How does God save a nation, a people, a person, a family, a child, a college student, a mechanic, a prostitute, a terrorist, a murderer, an atheist, a moralist, an alcoholic? Well, you always see 3 things:

**God’s mercy,**

**God’s messenger,**

**God’s message.**

We see it here: God wants Nineveh, God sends Jonah, and Jonah preaches a message. That is how it works.

**First, God has mercy.**

God moves first. No one wants God. No nation, no individual, no country, naturally wants God. Nineveh hates Israel and their God. But God wants them. In Jonah **1:2** God says *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city.* . . Then in **4:11** God says

***“Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city. . .”*** The book ends and begins with Nineveh. Now look at our text. **Verse 3** *Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city.* That is how most translations read. But in Hebrew (Jonah’s language, Israel’s language) it says this ***“Nineveh was a city great to God.”***

What does that mean? It mattered to God. This huge city, all these people, all this power and sin and wickedness, it matters to God. It was great to Him! He is grieved by their sin, angered by their evil, but He pitied them.

You see God’s heart here. **Verse 10** says *when God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented (turned, changed) of the disaster he had said he would do them* Our God, the Christian God, hurts and aches and longs for the nations, sinners, the most wicked of pagans. And God loves cities. New York, Chicago, LA, Dallas, Wichita, London, Mecca. He is a compassionate, loving, gracious, merciful, global God. And he is always pursuing and calling and running after sinners.

He made **covenants** (binding agreements) with Abraham and Israel and David. Those are global covenants. So with **Abraham**, God would bless all the nations through him and his offspring. **Israel** was God’s light to the nations. **David**, Israel’s king, and his line, is interesting.

**Psalm 72:10** *“May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! 11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him. May . . .all nations be blessed in him.*

Then God sends Jesus. He is Abraham’s son, in David’s line. And 3 strange things happen to him. He begins his ministry and 1) he is baptized, 2) he goes in the wilderness, where Satan tempts him, and 3) then chooses 12 disciples. Why? What is he doing?

Think who else was baptized, sent to a desert, and arranged in 12’s? Israel. They were in Egypt. They came through the water (baptized). They went to the wilderness. They had 12 tribes. Jesus is **embodying Israel**. He is the greater Abraham, the greater David, the True Israel.

And what does he do? Why did he come? He used three “the Son of Man came” statements? **Luke 19:10** *The Son of Man came, to seek and save the lost.* **Mark 10:45** *The Son of Man came, not to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.* **Matthew 11:19** *The Son of Man came eating and drinking* (with sinners). That was his mission: seek, save, find, search, give, eat, drink, die, rise, for sinners, outcasts, Nineveh! And he **commissioned** his followers to make disciples of the nations, baptize, and teach them.

Then we come to **Acts 10**.

Peter is resting. He has a vision. He sees all these unclean (to Jews) animals coming down. And God says *Arise, Kill and eat*. That's Cabelas slogan. What does the *vision mean*? Well, some men show up and say Cornelius has asked for you. Who is Cornelius. A gentile. A Roman. And Peter goes and the nations get the Gospel. Now where was Peter? Joppa. Where Jonah fled to. God wants the nations. He loves the world.

**Revelation 5** says Heaven's song is *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. For you ransomed people, from every tribe and tongue and nation and language."*

God pursues sinners relentlessly. He loves the nations. No one is too far from God. The Gospel can save anyone. There is no sin, no wickedness, that the Gospel can't redeem. **This is who God is**. Think of **Luke 15**. There are three parables. In all three, something is **lost**. A coin. A sheep. A son. Someone **searches**: a woman, a shepherd, a father. When its found, there is joy. That is what God is like. He is seeking and searching and finding.

Is this your **heart**, Metro East?

You know, we Christians are **somewhat arrogant**. We think our religion, our message, is unique. Of all religions and world-views; Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, secularism, atheism, humanism, we think we are unique. Why? What makes ours special? Well, **CS Lewis** has a word for you. He was asked that. Why is Christianity unique? He said, Easy, its grace. Grace: unmerited, undeserved, unwanted, one-sided, favor and kindness and love from our God.

**Second, God sends a messenger.**

This amazes me. God always sends a messenger, a preacher, a prophet, His Son, an apostle, a single mother, a doctor, a banker. In fact, in **Acts**, only humans speak the Gospel. There are visions and signs and miracles by God, but only humans preach the Gospel. **Acts 8** God teleports Philip to this Ethiopian, and he preaches to him. **Acts 9** Jesus appeared to Saul. Knocks him down, blinds him. Then says, "Go and find Ananias. He has a message." **Acts 10** an angel appears to Cornelius and says "Go send for Peter. He has a word."

God saves, but God saves **through the spoken word** of the messenger. He won't do this for us. He could. But he chooses to save, through messengers speaking. The

word works when someone hears. **Faith** comes by hearing. **Hearing** comes by preaching. **Preaching** comes by a preacher. He is a Savior and a Sender.

So 3 things about Jonah, the messenger.

He was captured by grace.

He sent to a place.

He was given a message.

Lets unpack those.

### **First, he was captured by grace.**

I love verse 1. *Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah, a second time.* Second time is grace language. God isn't done with Jonah. Jonah ran from His God. But God rescued Him. Jonah gets it now, at least for a chapter. He said back in **2:9**, *Salvation belongs to the Lord.* It is God's. He controls salvation. He saves. Its His to give out, not Jonah's. And **He wants Nineveh**. Jonah has tasted grace. He has tasted salvation. Now he can speak of it. See, unless the Gospel excites you, unless grace moves you, you won't tell others about it.

**Leslie Newbigin** says we evangelize, when there is an explosion of joy in us. It overflows. And when you **taste** grace, and know how **lost you were**, and how **lost** the world is, you'll speak about this. Jonah understands this now. *So is the Gospel stirring in your heart?* If not, ask God to awaken you, to quicken your heart and mind, to burden you for those without the Gospel.

### **Second, Jonah was sent to a place.**

God says to *arise and go to Nineveh. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh...* God sent him, not everywhere, but somewhere. He wasn't called to Babylon or Edom or Egypt, other prophets were, but he wasn't. My point is, all Christians are called to mission. That means cross-cultural (missions) for some, and coaching basketball for some. **Acts 17** says that God determines **when** we live and **where** we live. He ordains and orchestrates that. Which means where you are, is where He uses you. So where are you? Whose around you? Who do you know now whose without Christ.

### **Third, Jonah was given a message.**

God told him a message verse 2 says *call out against it the message that I tell you.* His message was given. It wasn't from him, it was from God. The **Apostle Paul** was adamant, the Gospel wasn't from Him. He was a messenger. He was a mouthpiece. He was simply telling what he received. See, evangelism is defined

simply as announcing the good news to non-believers. Or its two nervous people talking.

Its **not merely apologetics**. Its not debating and arguing and using tactics on non-Christians. Its part of it. But the word itself, evangelize, just means to tell good news.

Its **not social work**. Its not *just* doing good deeds. Those are important, but again, its telling the good news.

Its not sharing your **testimony**. You should tell that. But tell what Christ has done for all, not just you. We aren't the message.

Its **not getting results**. They might never believe. Now do good deeds. Use arguments. Pray for results. Share your story. **My point** is: we are given a message to announce. That is evangelism. It comes *through* us, not *from* us.

So he's captured by grace, he's sent to a place, and he's given a message.

**I want this to be us.** Jonah saw, in a fish, God's mercy and grace. He never saw the Cross. But we have. And we tremble over it. It took that to save us, but Christ came willingly! We have a message now. I am **praying for more** evangelism from us.

I don't mean more more events or programs. I mean more of us talking to the non-Christians in our paths. I pray for that. I can't force that. I can't guilt that. God has to do it. But we can get better. How? Glad you asked. I have 19 ways to grow in evangelism. Very quick.

1. Get around non-Christians
2. Know your season (stage, age, health, job play a factor in this). Do what you can you do, not what you can't do.
3. Know your Bible. Read books, but know The Book. Many, many don't.
4. Be holy.
5. Love, treasure, grow in, study, sing, discuss, think on, be amazed by, the Gospel
6. Pray for non-Christians, by name.
7. Eat with a non-Christian
8. Tell non-Christians your struggles (let them see your faith working)
9. Let others know you are a Christian (make it known somehow).
10. Invite them to a small group or church service
11. Read a book with them
12. Love, serve, care, for non-believers

13. Don't waste your friendship. Don't just befriend them and never mention Christ. Mention church, the Gospel, Christ early.
14. Share your story.
15. Be willingly to lose something (time, money, food, reputation, bass boat). It will cost something to evangelize.
16. Take a risk. Be bold and courageous and winsome.
17. If fruitless, be patient, pray, the Gospel is a stench of death, and the aroma of life.
18. Trust the Gospel. It can heal, forgive, touch, save anyone!!!!
- 19.

### **Third, God saves through His message.**

Look at verse 5. *And the people of Nineveh believed God.* They believe God, not Jonah. But, look at his message, his sermon, in verse 4 *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*” Lets pray. That was it. That was the sermon. 5 words in Hebrew! Don't get any ideas! But 5 words and repentance and renewal and mourning and sackcloth! Look at 5 *They called for a fast and put on sackcloth* (there was repentance, mourning, conviction, detoxing), and notice this *from the greatest of them to the least of them.*

Then in 6-8 we see that. The king repents. Verse 6 *he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* The greatest of them repented. Then he decrees in verse 7 *Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and let them (man and beast) call out mightily to God.* So the king repents (the greatest of them) and the cows repent (the least of them). Whats the point? The point is, everything bows to God's word! The Kings and the cows!

**Psalm 29** uses God's glory and God's voice interchangeably. He says God's voice is *over the waters*, its *powerful*, its *full of majesty*, it *breaks Lebanon's cedars*, it *flashes forth fire*, it *shakes the wilderness*, it makes the *deer give birth*, it *strips the forest bare*, and in his temple all cry, “*Glory!*”

In **Isaiah 55** God says *my word shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that I which I purpose...* Think of **Jesus**. He just says “Rise and walk.” And they lame walk. They get up. I can't do that. But God can. He can just speak. His word, his voice, his message is powerful. We **don't save people**. We don't change people. Our tactics or arguments or strategies don't save, God's Word, his message saves. This should **free us!**

So **two things**. One, get in the Word. Just read it. Open the book and read and think and pray and listen and immerse and taste and smell this book. There is no book like this. Nothing replaces this. Read the word. **Expect war**. Notice how easy a novel or a magazine or a blog reads. We burn through it. But a chapter of this kills us. Expect war. If you're **new in church** or **not a Christian**, read this book. Begin with Mark and the Psalms.

Second, speak these words. Speak to each other. Encourage, exhort, counsel with these words. Speak them to non-Christians. Get them *in* the word. Buy them a Bible. Help them read it. It is power!

Now **Luke 11:30** says *Jonah became a sign to Nineveh*. He preached and they repented. But then Jesus said, Luke 11:32 **Behold something greater (bigger, better, more weighty) than Jonah is here**. What does that mean? Well, Jonah preached the word. Jesus was, and is, the Living Word. **John 1:1** he is the eternal, equal with God, Word. And this Word took on flesh, dwelt among us, lived sinlessly, and died in our place, and rose again. He is the true, greater, better, Jonah. He is the message. His is the Savior. He is the Sender.

And when His message burns in you, it sends you out. So **mercy, messenger, message**. God wants your friends, co-workers, teammates, classmates. He is sending you. You have a message.

Lets pray.