

GET REAL - JONAH 2

- Talk about Liz Kids – collected 23- homework kits which will be distributed to our Title I teachers today and this week, plus each teacher will get a gift card to GW's. Missions Team says THANKS!!!!
- Acknowledge Emma and Melissa (Michael is gone with his folks for the weekend).

A LITTLE MORE BACKGROUND

- Jonah's place on a historical timeline
- Jonah's contemporaries: Hosea and Amos. They both prophesied against Israel because Israel would cling to their formal, ritualistic relationship with God, but their hearts actually were pursuing other gods. God kept calling His people to repent and return to Him and be restored, but the people didn't want to do it. [Unfortunately we will see this in Jonah.]
- Review last week: Jonah was headed in the wrong direction – down, down, down. He was asleep when he could have been awake, active, and praying. When we're headed in the wrong direction, God's unstoppable grace is known in the Word He gives us, in the ways in which He reminds us of whose and who we are, in the people he sends to help us, in the storms he hurls over our lives, and in the alternative transportation He arranges.

JONAH'S PRAYER

A. What Jonah Says

- Sinking under the waves – breakers – he could look up and see the bottom of the ship, now in calm water, but that suddenly calm water offered Jonah no movement upward. His clothes probably weighed him down also... seaweed wrapped around his head – he was drowning
- But then as his lungs were filling up with water and he was about to meet his watery grave, then BOOM! He was rescued.

1. How is the story in his prayer relatable to us?

- We were dead in sin. We were sinking.
 - But GOD rescued us.
2. The rescue was in the form of a FISH [show slide with whale and "headlines"] ...
- Not a whale – mammals; eat, digest, gas
 - Fish perhaps...
 - You always hear about exceptions: how a man finds a pocket of air in a whale and survives or how someone is swallowed whole by a hammerhead shark...

- We get too caught up in how it could happen, and unfortunately, this displays our desire to see, touch, and understand concretely.... *Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)* (perhaps review that it's seen in obedient action that in turn activates my faith, leads to encounters with God, and allows me to live into the destiny He has prepared for me)
- **THE POINT IS GOD PREPARED THE FISH.** And the fish had the right equipment to allow Jonah to be revived and to keep him alive for three days. Jesus does give credence to it actually happening (Matthew 12:39-40)

B. How Jonah Says It

- Often how things are said are as important as what is said. (NON-APOLOGY APOLOGY)
 - We want to read into this prayer of Jonah because we want everything to be “good” ... because then everything can be “good” for us.
1. What two ingredients are surprisingly missing from his prayer?
 - Confession of sin – at no point does Jonah admit to any wrongdoing. Compare with other prayers of confession, like Psalm 51 and Daniel 9.
 - Repentance – his language “my vows I will perform... salvation is of the Lord” are more related to who he was as a prophet. As such, many scholars believe that this was not a point where he got his act together to actually go to Nineveh. After all, if you turn the page to the next chapter, God tells him again to go to Nineveh... from a story perspective at least, you wouldn't think God would have to do that.
 2. What component is included?
 - There's a whole lot of “me” in this prayer. **27 times he refers to himself in the first-person.**
 - Even though our English translations have “You” and “Your” printed for us in this chapter, scholars agree that in Hebrew **Jonah does not address God personally, only very formally and distantly.**
 - Where he may have inserted a cry of confession and repentance, instead **he interjects a comparison** of the pagans to himself. (What he says is true, but given the self-centeredness of the prayer, many theologians wonder why he said it when he could have said he was sorry for NOT going to the pagans in the first place.)
 - So, this morning, **if you feel distant from God**, guess what? You are not alone! Even prophets – and occasionally, preachers – feel distant from God.

- This is important because if we don't recognize this distance that Jonah felt and this formality that he uses then we will miss a character in the Bible to whom we can relate. Unfortunately, the story of Jonah is mostly a story of what NOT to do, but... God uses everyone. And... Jonah reminds us, even with a negative example, that God not only wants to do something through us – and He will do something through us, sometimes even in spite of ourselves – but He wants to do something in us as well.

OUR PRAYERS

A. Less distant, and more direct.

Are you intimidated by prayer? Prayer is talking to God... you get to do that because Jesus died for you and by faith you are a child of God. [How does a good father respond to his son or daughter? You don't need to be afraid about getting it "wrong."]

B. Less focus on me, More focus on God.

Luke 18:10-13...

- Both prayers address God.
- Only one prayer asks God for something... by the way, Jonah doesn't ask God for anything, does he?
- Only one prayer recognizes a need for God and asks Him for mercy.
- Only one of the two men offering the prayer receives mercy from God.

C. No pride, More praise.

Psalm 73 (refer to PR's "Song of A Doubting Saint")... after Asaph presents his problem, and identifies his doubt, then he begins to focus on God and thanks God for what is real – God has put him on solid ground, God's goodness was all around him even when he didn't see it, and finally... God is all I need! This is where we need to be in all of our praying. God is all we need! How can we ask for anything else!

In being direct, God-focused, and full of praise in our prayer lives, we will discover a closeness with God that will move us to be more like our Savior.

When God puts us back on track, our opportunity is to come to Him in genuine repentance that changes the way we see ourselves and our actions and allows us to embrace God's unstoppable grace.

CONCLUSION: PRAY A PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE Psalm 86