

## JONAH 1:1-6

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### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- [Keasling Installation Update]
- Next six weeks in Book of Jonah.
  - One of 12 Minor Prophets.
  - Not called minor bc less important, but simply bc shorter.
- Which means that in our Bibles → Hard to find.
  - Here's the order: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Jonah, Chewbacca.<sup>1</sup>
  - That's an old preacher joke.
    - I apologize.
    - It's kind of like a "Dad Joke" → Impossible to resist.
- Turn to page 774 or follow along on the screen. [Read. Pray.]

### INTRODUCTION

There's a fairy tale about a **wicked witch** who lived in the woods. When travelers came by, she would offer them a bed for the night. The bed was wonderfully soft, but it was also cursed – fall asleep in this bed and you would turn to stone forever.

The witch had a **young servant girl** who, though powerless to break the curse, grew full of pity for the witch's victims.

One day, a **young man** came seeking a bed for the night. The servant girl could not bear to see him turned to stone. So she **threw sticks, stones and thistles** into his bed. He tossed and turned all night, unable to sleep a wink. The next morning he confronted the servant girl angrily. She smiled and replied, "You will never know the misery a good night of sleep would have brought you. Those were my **sticks and stones of love.**"

*Sometimes God puts sticks and stones of love in our beds to wake us up – lest we be turned to stone.<sup>2</sup>*

**Transition:** That's what today's sermon is about.

- Let's move from fairy tale to the true story of the Bible...
- And see two big ideas as we explore this theme.
- Starting with point 1 → Jonah's not the only one...

### WE ALL RUN FROM GOD

**V1:** The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai.

- As a prophet, Jonah's job was to hear God's word and then speak it to God's people.
- Nothing unusual about this introduction – but what God says next is surprising...

**V2:** Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city...

- Huh...
  - Jonah NOT being told to take God's word to God's people (Israelites).
  - Instead, God sends him outside of Israel to Nineveh (modern-day Iraq).

- Other prophets had briefly addressed other nations...
  - But none of them had ever been sent on field trip.
- Made **more surprising** by specific destination God has in mind.
  - If God's sending his prophet on international business, expect him to go somewhere nice.
    - Friendly neighbors to north, some peace-loving country.
    - But Nineveh isn't Canada or Switzerland.
  - Nineveh was **capital of Assyria** – Israel's enemy and THE most brutal empire of ancient times.
    - Erika Bleibtreu, **expert in Near Eastern Archaeology**, writes that Assyrian history is, "*as gory and bloodcurdling a history as we know.*"<sup>3</sup>
    - One example: After capturing enemies, cut off their legs and one arm, and then mockingly shake victim's remaining hand as he died.<sup>4</sup>

#### Transition:

- No wonder God says, **V2: their evil has come up before me.**
- And no wonder Jonah's not excited to go there: *I'm not ending up with no legs and one arm for the sake of these evil foreigners.*

**V3:** Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

- God says **Arise** in **V2** and boy does Jonah **rise** in **V3** – think about the **geography**.
  - Jonah is in **Israel**.
  - God sends him to **Nineveh** in modern-day Iraq (few **hundred** miles east).
  - Jonah heads for **Tarshish** in modern-day Spain (few **thousand** miles west).
    - Goes in the exact opposite direction.
    - As far as he possibly can → To very ends of earth as they were known at that time!
- He did all this to escape what?
  - **The presence of the LORD** (see that phrase is repeated twice in **V3**).
  - Jonah doesn't want to do what God told him to do → So he runs away from God.

#### Transition:

- It's quite easy to give Jonah a hard time for this...
  - Did he think you can escape God's presence?
  - Like he'd get to Tarshish and God wouldn't be there???
- But before we do that – laugh at Jonah for his foolishness – probably helps us to remember how our point – ***We all run from God.***
  - May not have set sail for the ends of the earth...
  - But sin isn't measured in miles...
  - Like Jonah, we run from God whenever we say "no" to God.<sup>5</sup>

***We run from God whenever we say "no" to God.***

### Apply:

- God has shown us how to live → Commands that are designed to help us flourish.
- But – like Jonah – we don't always like the sound of it → So we say “no” and run.
  - We **gossip** when God calls us to build others up.
  - We're **contentious** when God calls us to peace.
  - We refuse to **forgive** as God has forgiven us.
  - We fall into **sexual sin** online.
  - We fall into debt for the sake of **materialism**.
  - We neglect our families in the name of **professional success**.

***Can I ask you this morning: Where in your life are you saying “no” to God?***

- We have the chance to learn from Jonah:
  - Running from God will not take you where you want to go.
  - Sin overpromises and underdelivers – Every. Single. Time.
  - It might feel good in the moment, but it will not make you happy.

***Is there somewhere in your life that you need that reminder today?***

- Maybe you know → Make today the day you start to say “yes” to God.
- Maybe you don't know → Pray about it/see what God puts on your heart.

***You'll find something, bc one way or another – We all run from God.***

**Transition:** That's point 1. But there's more: When we run from God...

### GOD RUNS AFTER US

**V4:** The LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

- Do you see what God's up to?
  - Jonah runs but he doesn't get very far.
  - God comes after him → And he does so through a storm.
- He hurls a **great wind upon the sea**.
  - GREAT wind (V4) is same term that was used to describe GREAT city (V2).
  - Refusing to go to one, Jonah ends up in the other...

**Transition:** How does that make you feel?

- Not quite the rescue mission we expected...
- Let's be thoughtful about nuances of this text and see how they take us to our point – ***that God runs after us...***

### 1. Notice that sin – saying “no” to God – brings storms.

- **Sometimes sin brings its own storm.**
  - We reap what we sow.
    - **Drink** too much and you get hungover.
    - Leave **anger** unchecked and you become bitter.
    - Neglect **prayer** and you get stressed and tired.
  - Our decisions have consequences – cause/effect!
- **Other times storm is sent by God.**
  - That's what happened here with Jonah.
    - God stops us in our tracks.

- He puts obstacles in our path.
- He frustrates our sinful plans.
- He does this bc he loves us → Too much to let us run from him – if we need it, he'll send a storm.

*Sin brings storms.*

## 2. Notice that your storms are NOT all the result of your sins.

- Dear ones, this is a very important point...
  - There is not 1:1 correspondence bt all your troubles/things you've done wrong.
  - We might fear that from the previous thought: If sin brings storms, the pain/difficulties I'm experiencing in my life must be the result of my sin.
- But we know that's not always the case.
  - How do we know that?
  - Look at the **sailors** in our text!
    - They are in the same storm as Jonah...
    - But it's not bc of anything they've done!
- Yes, sometimes our storms are the result of our own sin – BUT:
  - **Sometimes our storms are the result of other people's sin.**
    - If you're facing the storm of **abuse**, don't ask what you've done wrong. You've been sinned against – that's the explanation for your storm...
    - You don't need to repent → You need **healing** for your wounds.
  - **Sometimes our storms are the result of living in a fallen world.**
    - If you've got **cancer**, don't jump to asking what you've done wrong. Our world is not as it should be, sometimes these diagnoses come...
    - You don't need to repent → You need **hope** in God and world to come.
- Don't assume all your storms are all your fault...
  - You may need to repent...
  - But maybe that's not it:
    - Maybe you need healing/hope...
    - You can find those in this church.

*Sin brings storms...*

*But your storms are NOT all the result of your sins.*

## 3. Notice the good news that God uses EVERY storm.

- This is one of the great and precious promises of the gospel:
  - Truth that's had a powerful impact on my life...
  - That can make a huge difference to you as well.
- Whatever the cause of your storm – your sin, how you've been sinned against, or the brokenness of life – God comes after you in it and will use it for your good.
  - That's what God does for **Jonah** → Uses storm to draw him back to himself.
  - That's what God does for **sailors** → Next week we'll see he uses the storm to bring them to saving faith.
  - And this morning we believe God is still doing same thing for **us**...

### Apply:

- Is it scary to think God might come after you in a storm?
  - Some people think so: “I can’t believe in a God who would use difficulty/pain.”
  - I get that...
- But consider this:
  - It might be scary to think that God would come after us in a storm...
  - But, frankly, it’s scarier to think that he doesn’t.
    - That the storms of life are outside of his control.
    - That there is no purpose behind it all.
    - That you’re just the victim of cruel coincidence/meaningless chance.
- It isn’t so.
  - Our God rules and overrules all things...
  - He can take bitter coals and turn them into gold.
  - He can use your worst storm to come running after you.

**Illustrate:** Many in church family will tell you it’s true → This week **Jennifer Ayers** shared her testimony on our social media.

- Jennifer was in a car accident in 2016 → An unwelcome storm.
- But medical treatment that followed led to fortuitous discovery of a tumor in her brain.
  - She had treatment → And Jennifer survived.
  - The accident – she says – turned out to be “*a blessing in disguise.*”
- Jennifer has endured more storms since – I encourage you to check out our social media to read the rest – but her conclusion is this:

*I’ve never had such an intimate relationship with the Lord as when I was going through these trials. When you go through the valley, you see beauty from the ashes... It’s hard to describe until you go through it personally...*

*God has turned my pain into purpose, allowing me to share His love & hope with others. It feels like a small foretaste of eternity. After all, He’s the One who ultimately walks us all the way home.*

- Don’t doubt that God will do the same for you.
  - That’ll he’ll use your storm, whatever the cause...
  - To come running after you.

**Transition:** How can you be sure?

**CONCLUSION: Bc ultimately Jesus entered the storm...**

- Book of Jonah will teach us that:
  - God not detached professor in sky/teaching lessons from above/grading response.
  - He is the God of love who comes running after us.
- To do that, Jesus entered in...

*To all the storms of this life → And the storm of the cross where he died for us.*

- Now no one – not Jonah/sailors/Assyrians/us – are beyond the reach of his grace.

**Rom 8:32:** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

### **THE CLOSE: Let me close with two questions...**

- **First:** If you're in a storm – whatever the cause – can I encourage you to look for God.
  - How is he at work?
  - What is his word of challenge, healing, or hope?
    - Interpret your life through this God-centered lens...
    - You'll find he has good things for you – *he's running after us*.
- **Second:** If you're not in a storm – how can you encourage someone who is?
  - Might be a friend, a family member, or a relative...
  - God could use you to go running after them...
    - Maybe they need a word of challenge, healing, or hope.
    - How can you run after them – *as God runs after us?*

### **CONCLUSION**

- Like the fairytale, life is full of sticks and stones...
- But our God uses them for love...

*When we run from God, God comes running after us.*

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*.
- Ray Cortese, *Jonah: God's Unrelenting Pursuit of You*.
- Bryan Estelle, *Salvation Through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah*.
- Sinclair Ferguson, *Man Overboard! The Story of Jonah*.
- J. D. Greear, *Castaway: The Book of Jonah*.
- Craig Groeschel, *Jonah*.
- Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal Prophet*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.
- Tim Mackie, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*.
- Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*.
- Tom Tarrants, *Consumed By Hate, Redeemed By Love*.
- Daniel Timmer, *A Gracious and Compassionate God*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> This joke comes from J. D. Greear, *I Am Jonah*, accessed [here](#) 1/9/2020.

<sup>2</sup> This illustration is taken from and in part quotes from Tim Keller, *The Prodigal Prophet*, 143-145.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Keller, 10.

<sup>4</sup> See Keller, 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> I owe this idea to J. D. Greear who said, “Rebellion is simply saying ‘no’ to God.” *I Am Jonah*, accessed [here](#) 1/9/2020.