



Running From God

Jonah 1:1-3 | Ryan Pfeiffer | Sept. 17, 2023

Jonah.

- Stands among the 12 minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- Minor Prophets in Israel's History.
- Absolutely unique— only one where a prophet is “sent” to a foreign nation.
- Jonah probably takes place around 760BC.

Nineveh.

1. Capitol city of Assyria— established and significant power.
2. Immediate threat- Israel. in 722 BC (40yrs from Jonah) Invades N.Kingdom
3. They already had a 100 years of intimidating and taxing Israel.

Before God can breakthrough in Nineveh, First he has to breakthrough to Jonah.

- God wants to reach Nineveh through Jonah
- God also wants to reach Jonah through Nineveh.

God wants to bring renewal to the world, community... begins with us.

This line... Go to that great city of Nineveh... because of its wickedness...

Introduces the theme— the tension we experience between God's compassion and conviction... his grace and his truth... and mercy/ wrath.

Through Jonah we see ourselves... the resistance we have to this tension.

- What is God doing with all the evil in the world!
- Why doesn't God put evil people in their place?
- Why does the Bible have to talk about God's wrath and anger?
- What about all the hypocrisy and evil in the Church?
- Why does the Bible insist on us reaching out to others? Can't God do it?

Jonah not a model believer... he's a safe harbor for our doubts and resistance

FOCUS. Running from God's Word and Running from God's Will.

GOD'S WORD. 1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai...

Heb for “word” is dābār. דָּבָר = word, message, promise, command.

1. God speaks to people... reveals his truth... promises & commands.
2. Nature... The Bible... Reason... The Holy Spirit

The barrier for most of us- if God speak to us- how can I know it's really God?



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Here- problem isn't IS GOD SPEAKING... rather... I don't LIKE what He's saying!
God's WORD reveals His TRUTH... moral truth... sin/ righteousness, Good/evil, right/ wrong.

God's word is revealing the truth of Nineveh's evil and wickedness

Can you think of an area where God's word has offended you?

- The notion of God's wrath, judgement and Hell.
- That God allows trials for growing our faith.
- The roles of men/women in the church.
- Sexual Ethics and boundaries w/ how we express ourself
- The call to forgive and love our enemies.

Certainly there's the challenge of discerning God's intent from our opinions

Greatest challenge is receiving God's truth once it's clear to us.

I think the assumption for some can be if I know it's God truth I'll accept it.

1. Really? Jonah is meant to be a mirror to our hearts. It's more complicated.
2. The temptation to run away from those passages and ideas... skip over.

Sometimes it's not God we are running from but religious people?

God's truth puts us at odds with the values of our world but also our own cherished and closely protected values.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6. Some vs Everyone.

- What I love... Jonah runs... God chases... there's room for our doubts...
- If we'll let God... He'll lead us through them... we need a safe place.

GOD'S WILL. 2 Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it...

Hebrew has a word NIV omits. (qûm) = arise. stand up. Then "go"
It puts urgency in the call to go... rise up Jonah... I want to send you.

But the idea that God wants to send Jonah is more than a truth... its a call.
God doesn't just speak to us... he sends us—> GOD'S WILL.

When God sends a prophet to speak hard truth... it's for mercy!



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“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Matthew 23:37.

If God didn't want to have mercy he'd just drop the hammer on Nineveh.

We're talking about the challenge of God's compassion.

For Jonah, Ninevah represents:

- Those who are a threat to national security
- Those who are different from him racially and religiously
- Those who are evil before God.

The closer we become to God- the more room God makes in our heart others.

The wider our range of ability to find common ground, empathize, connect.

Confronts the ways we allow our agendas to harden us to God's mercy.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

When God's glory is revealed through both... Renewal happens.