

Sermon Notes

“Jonah: Pursued by the Hound of Heaven”

Jonah 3 — “Serving”

November 18, 2007

A. Introduction

1. Jonah is the story of
2. why is it applicable today (cf. Titus 2:11-14)?
3. what has happened to Jonah in chapters 1 and 2?

B. The Failed Servant is Re-Commissioned 3:1-2

1. what does this show about God?
2. what is the nature of God’s commission to Jonah (cf 1:2)?
3. what resources does God provide to His servants (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9, Zechariah 4:9, Luke 12:11-12)?
4. what is our commission and its nature (cf. Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 1:16, 1 Timothy 1:15)?

C. The Servant Undaunted by the Magnitude of the Task 3:3-4a

1. what was Nineveh like?
2. how did Jonah handle this task?

D. The Servant Proclaims God’s Message 3:4b

1. what was the essence of the message?
2. how does this message relate to the gospel (cf. Acts 17:31, 2 Peter 3:9, 14-15)?
3. what do the Lord Jesus’ words tell about Jonah’s message (cf. Luke 11:29-30, Matthew 12:39-41) and the sign of Jonah?
4. what about our message to our world (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)?

E. The Servant Sees Surprising Results 3:5-10

1. 3:5a – they responded with ...
2. 3:5b – they responded with ...
3. 3:6-8 – who was included in this response?
4. 3:9 – what did this response depend upon?
5. 3:10 – how did God respond?

F. Conclusion – what is the lesson from Jonah for us today (cf. Jeremiah 33:8, Romans 12:1)?

A. Introduction

1. Jonah is a story of God’s grace

- a. let me repeat what has been said before
- b. God, as the ‘Hound of Heaven’ has pursued Jonah
 - (A) chasing after His reluctant and fleeing prophet
 - (B) pursuing Jonah by the storm, by the sailors, by the sense of Jonah’s own conscience
 - (C) is not just
 - (1) a whale of a fish tale
 - (2) an Old Testament story that is easy to dramatize for a Sunday School class

c. but it is a story of God’s grace

- (A) His grace to the sailors who were brought to faith
- (B) His grace to the wicked city of Nineveh
- (C) and His grace to the rebellious prophet himself

d. and that message,

- (A) is as pertinent today
- (B) as it was 2,700 years ago when Jonah lived
- (C) as it was 2,000 years ago when Paul penned this early statement of faith to pastor Titus — *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. — (Titus 2:11-14)*

2. Let us recapitulate the history of Jonah thus far:

- a. now, as an aside, it doesn’t take many readings of this book to come to the realization that although the book refers to Jonah in the third person (as ‘he’ or as ‘Jonah’), it is clear from what the book contains that if indeed it was not written by Jonah himself, then it was written by someone who had received the

story first hand from Jonah's own lips ... there are too many personal references and thoughts to be otherwise

- b. in Chapter 1 we find 'Jonah Shirking' – commissioned by God to bear a message to the wicked city Nineveh and taking a course 180° to the contrary – but God pursued him to save Jonah from his own rash actions
- c. in Chapter 2 we have the record of 'Jonah Saved,' being taken from the depths of the sea and death, and there giving praise and thanks to God for his salvation until, after three days, he is vomited by the fish onto dry land
- d. « Now, let us read Jonah, chapter 3 »

3. This morning we shall consider this passage as follows

- a. The failed servant is re-commissioned
- b. The servant is undaunted by the magnitude of the task
- c. The servant proclaims God's message
- d. and, The servant sees surprising results

B. The Failed Servant is Re-Commissioned 3:1–2

- 1. Then the LORD spoke to Jonah a second time: 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message of judgment I have given you.' (NLT)
- 2. God doesn't give up on failed servants
 - a. there are instances in the Scriptures
 - (A) of some who failed in obeying God's commands
 - (B) and their punishment was immediate and severe
 - (C) Adam, Eve, Nadab, Abihu, Korah, Ananias, Sapphira
 - (D) but these were the exception rather than the rule
 - (E) their punishment being exemplary
 - (F) that mankind, that a nation, that the church
 - (G) should know that the Lord our God is a holy God and that we are not to trifle with His commandments

- b. but the Scriptures abound with instances of persons being given a second chance to follow God after failing Him
 - c. in this room I have no doubt that there are those who can recount not just having a second chance given to them by God, but repeated chances after repeated failures
 - d. God is a God of grace – He shows it to us, He showed it to Jonah ... Jonah was given a second chance
3. God's commission is specific
- a. 'and deliver the message of judgement I have given you'
 - b. Jonah was not left to depend upon his own resources
 - (A) the servant of God can rely upon God's strength
 - (1) 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' (2 Corinthians 12: 9a); Jesus to Paul
 - (2) '... to Zerubbabel .. 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.'" (Zech. 4:6)
 - (B) the servant of God has God to give him speech — 'When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defence, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.' (Luke 12:11-12)
 - c. Jonah 1:2 narrates the message first given to him, 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.' – it had not changed
 - d. we, too, have a specific commission with a specific message
 - (A) 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - (B) 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.' (Romans 1:16)
 - (C) the book of Acts shows that this message may be dressed in many different fabrics depending on the audience, but the finished suit is the same: 'It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.' (1 Timothy 1:15)

- C. The Servant Undaunted by the Magnitude of the Task 3:3-4a
1. 'This time Jonah obeyed the LORD's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: ...' (NLT)
 2. let me describe the GNA (Greater Nineveh Area)
 - a. archeologists tell us that the inner city of Nineveh was surrounded by a wall 8 miles in circumference
 - b. but this was a city on the plains – well watered – and like Toronto and many cities in the western hemisphere, towns and cities grew up around this city
 - c. like the boroughs that surrounded the medieval castles in Europe, the people living on them depended on the walls in their centre as a place to flee for protection
 - d. a writer of the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus tells us that this outer city, the GNA was 60 mi circumference, so that it would take 3 days just to walk around it
 - e. to deliver a message to such a city would be a daunting task – just to preach the message in our own town and region oftentimes seems to be a daunting task
 3. so how did Jonah handle it?
 - a. Jonah went for a day's walk and he handled it bit by bit
 - (A) when he arrived at the outskirts of the suburbs
 - (B) he began to proclaim the message
 - (C) then, step by step he shouted out the message
 - (D) and, on that day, as he walked, he proclaimed to the people of Nineveh the message God had given to him
- D. The Servant Proclaims God's Message 3:4b
1. '... he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"' (NLT)
 - a. now, in the way speeches and sermons are reported in the Bible, there is no need to conclude that this is the complete text of Jonah's message; it undoubtedly was not; but,
 - b. it certainly tells us the kernel of the message: judgement
 - c. Nineveh is going to be destroyed as a consequence of its sinfulness. That is really the heart of the

message. And sin is always going to be judged in the life of an individual, a community, or a nation; that message is very consistent in the Scriptures. ^{-(2)}}.

2. Judgement is an integral part of the Gospel

a. Jonah was delivering God's message, not his own ideas

b. Nineveh had 40 days

(A) then judgement was coming

(B) but why the 40 day period? — Jonah knew why! as we shall see next Sunday morning

(C) if they were so wicked, why not just kapow! now?

c. the people before the flood were wicked

(A) deserving of judgement

(B) for 100 years they could hear the warnings of Noah, a preacher of righteousness

(C) why a hundred years?

(D) so Noah could build the ark?

(E) hardly likely; not for a God who created the cosmos in a day – to create the ark would be a small thing

(F) if they were so wicked, why not just kapow! now?

d. we live in a wicked world

(A) the older I get the greater is this realization

(B) if we are so wicked, why not just kapow! now?

e. because God is a God of grace

(A) the 100 years of Noah was an opportunity

(B) the 40 days of Nineveh was an opportunity

(C) and God's warning of judgement to come is given to the world to day as an opportunity ...

(1) "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

(2) "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

(3) "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing

that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

- (4) "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you," (2 Peter 3:14-15)

f. the God of grace gives an opportunity for repentance

3. the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself show that Jonah's message was one given that people could repent:

a. 'As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."' (Luke 11:29-30)

b. ... 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.' (Matthew 12:39-41 NIV)

c. the sign of Jonah, his resurrection from the depths of the sea, and the sign of the Son of Man, His resurrection from the dead, are given by God to a wicked world

(A) Jonah's being punished – God will judge sin

(B) Jesus being nailed to the cross – God had judged sin – "*He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.*" (Romans 4:25)

(C) Jonah's resurrection – God seeks repentance

(D) Jesus' resurrection – God seeks repentance

4. God's people are in this world to bear a message not only of the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ but also the message of destroying to those who reject the gospel: "*For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?*" (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

- E. The Servant Sees Surprising Results 3:5-10
1. Response of Faith 3:5a
 - a. 'The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, ...' (NLT)
 - b. they believed Jonah's message (if not Jonah!)
 - c. they believed in the God of Jonah's message
 - d. the response was not limited by rank
 - e. their faith is not merely cognitive but made evident in ...

 2. Response of Contrition 3:5b-8
 - a. Jonah spoke God's message; it spread through the city by word of mouth; a marvel occurred, summarized in v. 5b: '[... and from the greatest to the least, they decided to go without food and wear sackcloth to show their sorrow.](#)' (NLT)
 - (A) [To put on that scratchy burlap covering acknowledges that one deserves God's judgment and affliction. It symbolizes grieving over one's own sin. For the king to sit in ashes means he leaves his seat of authority and humiliates himself. He prostrates himself before God in repentance.](#) ^{-{3}}.
 - (B) let me say that such repentance, abject contrition for the sin by which we have offended a holy, almighty God is largely lacking from the teaching of churches today who preach Jesus Christ as a heavenly helper rather than the divine Redeemer from the bondage and penalty of sin
 - b. Verse 6-8 continues as an expansion of how this contrition came about, [When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in sackcloth and sat on a heap of ashes. Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: 'No one, not even the animals, may eat or drink anything at all. Everyone is required to wear sackcloth and pray earnestly to God. Everyone must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence.'](#) (NLT)
 - (A) could this prophet from the backwaters of Israel have known his message would have reduced the king of the Assyrian empire to sackcloth and ashes?
 - (B) but the God of grace is the sovereign LORD
 - (C) we pale before authorities and rulers and seem helpless to the laws they enact – but God is still on the throne
 - c. what good would this do? Verse 9 provides the thinking that directed the king of Assyria: '[Who can tell?](#)

Perhaps even yet God will have pity on us and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us.' (NLT)

- (A) the rationale of trust, even though it sees the total hopelessness of one's condemnation because of sin
- (B) cast's itself on the mercy of God, on the compassion of the God of grace – which is possible for us do because we have the evidence of the cross

3. Response of God

3:10

- a. God honours their response: 'When God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, he had mercy on them and didn't carry out the destruction he had threatened.' (NLT)
- b. the Ninevites, by their act of repentance
 - (A) stepped out of being subject to God's unchangeable, implacable wrath against the wicked
 - (B) and stepped into God's unchangeable, unspeakable love, grace and mercy to the humble, repentant sinner
 - (C) which, in human terms we describe as God relenting – even though He is unchanged, but man who changes
 - (D) because the result is that Nineveh was delivered out of the judgement that otherwise was certainly coming
 - (E) God's response is consistent with His command and purpose in sending Jonah with the judgement message

4. and, to this world around us

- a. a world that disbelieves in God,
- b. a world dishonours His holy name by their vile use of it in cursing and in thoughtless references
- c. the God of Jonah is still the same God of grace
- d. waiting to receive those who turn to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- e. saying, 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me.' (Jeremiah 33:8)

F. Conclusion

1. Jonah, in this chapter, obeyed God and through that service God worked a mighty repentance in the hearts of a pagan city
2. Service to God
 - a. is part of our overall worship of God – you may think that such things as the announcements detract from worship in our morning service – try viewing them as declarations of how God is working in the various programs He has implanted in this church body; as occasions for praise
 - b. service to God is an act of worship – this lays behind Paul's words, "[I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.](#)" (Romans 12:1 AV) as he introduces his teaching on how our Christian faith should affect our way of life
 - c. as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - (A) accept the commission that He has given to you in common with every other one of His disciples - 'go ye
 - (B) do not be daunted by
 - (1) the magnitude of the task –
 - (2) "[... Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.](#)" (John 4:35)
 - (3) [Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."](#) (Matthew 9:37-38)
 - (4) the credentials of your audience
 - (C) proclaim the message as you have received and know it, a simple testimony to God's salvation
 - (D) be ready to see unexpected results – attempt great things for God, expect great things from God
 - d. God intends that every one of His children serve Him – we are only channels through whom His love is made known

1. © 2007 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard (NAS) version of the Bible, © 1960 ... 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. “Jonah: Delivering God’s Message” by Rev. Doug Goins, Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California – Kerux sermons #1574
3. *Ibid* – by Rev. Doug Goins