

DEVOTIONALS:

5-11 MARCH 2023

Read: Jonah 1: 4-17

STORMS EXPLAIN JUDGMENT AND WRATH

Adapted from: www.fellowshipbiblestudy

JONAH

for lent

Last week we began by understanding the context and circumstances surrounding Jonah's call from God. Jonah the son of Amittai is anything but faithful. God calls him to arise and go northeast but he has southwest instead just to get away from God. This is extremely counter-intuitive for a Jew. Landlocked Israel has always thought of the sea as a tempestuous place, where

uncertainty, chaos and disaster reigns. In this study, we'll dive right in and unpack more of Jonah's response to God's call and command.

The mariners decide to cast lots in order to try to find out who was responsible for this evil (Jonah 1:7). The lot fell on Jonah (certainly by no mistake!). They then pepper Jonah with a series of questions which Jonah replies selectively (Jonah 1:8-9). The table below summarizes their exchange.

Questions from mariners	Jonah's answer to questions
On whose account has this evil fallen on us? (Jonah 1:8a)	Jonah knew that it was due to him, but he does not answer their question with an outright admission.
What is your occupation? (Jonah 1:8b)	He does not answer either! He does not tell them that he is a full-time prophet.
Where do you come from? (Jonah 1:8c)	He also does not answer, and the answer is in 2 Kings 14:25 . He is from Gath-hepher.
What is your country? (Jonah 1:8d)	He is from Israel, but he doesn't tell them.
Of what people are you? (Jonah 1:8e)	This is the only one he replies to, telling them that he is a Hebrew.

Jonah doesn't seem to be answering the mariner's questions at all (Jonah 1:9). In fact, his thoughts seem to have taken a different turn. The mariners were trying to problem solve but Jonah was downloading his theology. Jonah knows the real answer to the real question that they are not asking. He is thinking about His God and knows that the cause of their problems is his God, "the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9b). In verse 9, Jonah also used the personal name of God ("LORD") for the first time, and when Jonah thinks about the LORD, he would also be led to think about his sins.

By this time in the chapter, all the dramatic actions and experiences led the mariners and Jonah to recognize who God was, and they also saw their sin. Knowing God truly always leads us to know our sin. This is the pattern in the Bible. Everyone who sees the God in His glory leaves in fear. No one meets God goes away feeling #blessed or #deeplyloved and unmoved.

Instead, those who encounter God leave saying with Isaiah the prophet "woe is me". Why do we not all feel this way when we come to the Word or go to church? We have all developed profound coping mechanisms and also rationalize away all that we hear. Sometimes we cling to the "good" that we have done, like reading our Bibles. At other times, we think that this sermon is good for someone else. We may even communicate or share what we hear and then move on with life. We devise a million ways to push away what we have heard and tell ourselves that we are not as bad as we are. But when God shows up in a storm and forces us into the corner, we are forced to see who we are and who He is. We are also reminded from this chapter to shut off our coping mechanisms when we come before God's Word.

Jesus was caught in a storm with His disciples too, but unlike Jonah, it wasn't because He ran away from God and had His own disobedience to atone for. On the contrary, Jesus was fully obedient to the commands of God the Father, and took the form of man. Jesus was a righteous prophet with the full authority of God's King. He "rebuked the wind" and calmed the sea with His words (Mark 4:39), and his disciples were "filled with great fear" (Mark 4:41). "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41). Jesus is the God of Ps 89.

In this storm, Jesus wasn't hurled off the boat and calmed it with His words. But just as how Jonah died that the mariners might live, Jesus drowns in the sea of God's wrath on behalf of sinners. He willingly hurled himself off, walking to the cross and laid down His life on His own. He paid the price in full.

As a Christian, you have One who gave himself for you and all other Christians, and hurled Himself headfirst into God's wrath. Can't you see the depths of His love? He is not a reluctant Savior! He walked to the cross by Himself. He did not need to be kicked and push to act on behalf of the sinners. Every step He took was His own free will. Why? He loves you and me.

Sometimes this thought grows stale, because we have developed our own coping mechanisms. But let us not forget and constantly remind ourselves that He loves you and me because He loves you and me. Is your heart cold today? Have you forgotten this wonderful news? Have you been running away from God? What will melt your cold heart? Only the white-hot passion of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

See this God who chases us down and could throw a storm to bring us to our knees and back to Him. See our God who pursued us relentless, who though He was God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but emptied Himself and gave Himself willingly for us. See this mighty God hurling Himself into the storm. Behold your God!

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- What did the crew find out from the lot that was drawn (1:7-10)? List at least three things they found out about Jonah.
- Why were the men alarmed when they heard Jonah answer (1:10)?
- What did the men do after hearing Jonah (1:11)? What did Jonah advise them (1:12)?
- How did the men respond to Jonah's suggestion (1:13)? Why do you think they responded this way? How come the storm got worse?
- What did the men do next (1:14-15)? How does that differ from verse 5?
- What happened to the storm upon throwing Jonah in the sea (1:15)? How did the men then respond (1:16)?
- Do you think we should conclude that disobedience is okay because it brings people to understand God more? Why or why not?
- What happened to Jonah (1:17)? For how long? What might have Jonah's experience been like?
- What did Jonah's experience of 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish predict? How do we know? Refer to Matthew 12:39-40.
- Jonah's life was used as an example for Jesus' death and resurrection. How does Jonah's life as a prophet in this book differ from Jesus' life?
- Do you think God was trying to bring Jonah to repentance or to simply punish him for his disobedience? Why do you think so?
- What do you think the major point of chapter 1 is? Have you ever openly disobeyed the Lord? Can you retell some consequences?
- List some reasons God's people disobey the Lord. What forms of disobedience are you most susceptible to? Why?

Prayer: But the storm was getting worse and worse, and they got nowhere. So, they cried out to the LORD, "O LORD, we pray, don't punish us with death for taking this man's life! You, O LORD, are responsible for all this; it is your doing." Then they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and it calmed down at once.

WOMEN'S HISTORY CELEBRATION LITANY

Prayer: We remember that March is Women's History Month. Thank you for all the cherished women in our lives and in our histories: mothers, sisters, friends and neighbors. God, may women across the globe continue to be empowered, knowing the love you offer. Amen.

Leader: Today we celebrate the strength, power, passion, beauty, courage, and faith of women across this world, throughout History, and in our own lives. Made in the image and likeness of God, He chose the woman to lead, support, nourish, and deliver His glory to the earth.

People: We praise God for the creation of the woman.

L: We celebrate women for following the Savior's example of service. These vessels of life and encouragement, these wives and mothers, these believers and ministers, these sisters and friends, who are often overlooked, choosing to relinquish their will for the uplifting of others.

P: We honor God for endowing the spirit of service into the heart of the woman.

L: We give reverence to every woman, who like the beautiful, thoughtful, mindful, and powerful women of scripture, continue to defy odds, banish stereotypes, and serve in the face of oppression and tradition.

P: We thank God for the unselfish spirit that lives in the heart of the woman.

L: We honor the women of our past who were beaten, raped, and abused because of skin color and gender. We honor their resilience and intuition to escape and assist others with escaping. We honor those who blazed trails and rose above the conditions of their time. We honor those mighty women who tarried in prayer and sang the songs of Zion while their backs were lashed and their wombs mistreated.

P: We worship God for the memory our ancestors, mothers, and grandmothers.

L: We celebrate the women of today. We celebrate the sharing of their gifts, talents, and skills. We celebrate their ability to manage the home and the office. We celebrate their ability to serve as a public official and a Sunday School teacher. We celebrate those who are required to be both the matriarch and the patriarch, and those who are strong enough to fight for civil equality and bold enough to pursue their personal, and God-given, dreams! For all who continue in the struggle for liberation of humankind despite hardship, misunderstanding, and ridicule...

All: We praise God for the virtuous women who persevered through our yesterdays, influence our todays, and shape our tomorrows. God created woman and has found favor in her, and has made her a testimony of God's never-ending love, grace, and mercy for His children. Amen!

*Adapted from resources at "The African American Lectionary" (www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org)

PRAYER & CONCERNS

- **We still need YOU! We need leaders and volunteers to serve in various positions on committees and boards. You may not think you have the gift, talent, and/or time to serve, but all are called to work in the kingdom. We need you!**
- Our **church family members and friends** are experiencing all forms of challenges and concerns. "Lord, give me the courage to face the challenges and ills that come. Help me to persevere and not give up. Give me the strength to face these storms. Pour out your peace over me and keep me in your perfect peace. Amen."
- **Bro. Bob Krell**, after spending a couple of days in the hospital, has returned home. He is appreciative for your prayers and cards for renewing of strength and healing. Thank you, God, for hearing and answering my prayer. Please mail cards and notes of support and encouragement to: Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.
- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** having been diagnosed with Epilepsy, is still working with her medical team to find the correct medications and doses to control the seizures. She is very grateful for your love, prayers and support. Special prayers for Mr. Pat as he cares for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.

- Our Sweet, Sweet Gentleman, **Mr. Allan Kieckhafer** who passed away on January 25, 2023 was celebrated with a loving, honorable and joyous Celebration of Life Service on 30 January 2023. We have stood on the shoulders of this saintly giant and we give God praise and thanks for all that Mr. Allan taught us, the amazing legacy of service he has left us to live into and the vital a role he played in helping us grow into who we are now. “Almighty Father, you have built up your Church through the love and devotion of your saints: inspire us to follow the example of Mr. Allan whom we grieve his passing. May we, Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, rejoice with him in the vision of your glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.” We pray for Mr. Allan’s family and the community of West Bend. Amen.
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** is still admitted at The Pavilion at Glacier Valley. She requests your prayers and support as she continues to journey with health concerns. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Words cannot begin to express the heartfelt sadness and grief we are experiencing for the passing of our beloved **Ms. Beverly “Bev” June Vogel**. To Ms. Bev’s family: “Always be assured that you have our full support, prayers and love.” May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection. Amen.
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We’re keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Jeri Bowerman**, had cardiac stents inserted. Please send her your cards and notes of love, support and courage: Ms. Jeri Bowerman, New Perspectives Senior Living, 2130 Continental Drive, #322, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Dick Simmons**, diagnosed with acute leukemia. “Dear God, we place our worries in your hands. We place Mr. Dick’s sickness under your care and humbly ask for strength and comfort. Be near him in times of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Dick’s strength and courage may not fail; give him confidence in the power of your grace, that even when he is afraid, may he put his whole trust in you. We pray all of these things in Your name. Amen. Mr. Dick, Ms. Shirley and family, we are sending you love, hugs, support and prayers during this difficult time. Cards, notes filled with prayers and support can be mailed to: Mr. Dick and Mrs. Shirley Simmons, 2908 Valley Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr.**, continues to quietly face medical challenges. Your cards and notes of support and well wishes for Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, what an example Jonah is to all of us. Thank You that even when we are faithless, You remain faithful. But I pray that I would be ready and willing to hear and obey Your call on my life, no matter how difficult or unusual it may be. Use me, I pray, to share the Good News of salvation so that many who are dead in their sins may come to know Christ as Saviour and Lord - to Your greater praise and glory. In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN.

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martín