

Jonah – Lessons Learned – Jonah 1-4

We're looking at Jonah this week – the 5th person in our Lessons Learned series

And I trust that you're finding these to be far more than nice bedtime Bible stories

I hope you're seeing the lessons, and living the life – the life to which God has called u

And some of the lessons, as we'll see with Jonah, are literally of a life and death nature

Lessons that we have to get, and embrace, in order to even *have* life, let alone live it

So turn with me to Jonah 1 (**Intro**)

Jonah is writing; Around 760BC; About 100 years after Elijah

Since this story is one of the most well known in the Bible, I'm going to forego an overview of it, and dive right in (read 1:1-10)

- 1-3 – Jonah wastes no time cluing us in to the fact that he was running from *the presence of the Lord* ; stated 2 times in v3
God said to go to Nineveh (**map** – ESV Study Bible, p.1685) – 500 miles to the NE, near modern day Mosul in Iraq . . .
Instead, Jonah went the exact opposite direction to Tarshish – which is probably located somewhere in the western Mediterranean

But the main point here is that he was *running* from God*****

4-6 – this was obviously at a time, not unlike ours, when they believed in all kinds of gods
And given their desperation, they didn't care whose god calmed the storm, they just wanted it stopped

7 – which of course, if *God* wasn't in it, would've been a useless way of determining fault
But on this occasion he was, and God used it to put the spotlight on Jonah

8-10 – they weren't afraid b/c he named YHWH as his God, but b/c they put 2+2 together
IOW if Jonah's God made the sea, that means he has control over it
And if Jonah made him mad, then no wonder they were in the mother of all storms

The first lesson of which is . . .

LESSON 1 – You can run but you can't hide (Ch 1)

You can run from God, but you cannot hide from God

Eventually the sailors threw him overboard in v15 – they *hurled him into the sea*
And then v17 says – *The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*
He couldn't hide, despite the fact that he was running

- And I'm going to guess that some of you are doing the same – you're running
Oh, it may not look like it; And you're sitting here in church alright
But your heart and soul is in a full sprint in the opposite direction, isn't it
You know good and well that God is calling you to himself, or calling you *back* – and you'll have nothing to do with him, will you?

Let me tell you something – if that's you, you can run, but you cannot hide

If God has your number, he will pursue you and pursue you and pursue you until you *stop*
and turn to him

There's no getting around it; No getting away

And if you have God's *Spirit* within you . . .

If you're one of his own, like Jonah was . . .

But you're living in sin, or intentionally ignoring God's will for your life, or deliberately disobeying him – it's even worse

How can you run from someone who lives within you? Let alone hide from him?

You can't; Nor will he let you

- In fact, based on the example of Jonah's life, there are at least 4 methods or 4 means that God will use, in his pursuit of you (**4 Means of Pursuit**)
The first of which is . . .

1. He'll bring *people* to bear on your life to wake you up – **people to wake you up**
Like he did literally with Jonah in v6, when the captain shook him out of his slumber
What do you mean, you sleeper? As in, what are you doing you deadbeat?
What are you doing with your life? Wake up; Get with it
If you're running from God, you can expect that he will put *people* in your path to wake you up

2. Exposure of your sin

You can expect that he will expose your guilt and sin, no matter how hard you try to hide it

That's what he did with Jonah when the *lot* fell to him in v7 – he was exposed

His fault was laid bare for everyone to see

Has that happened to you? If not, it will; B/c you can't hide

3. He'll nag you with questions, like he did w/ Jonah – **nagging questions**

Sometimes those questions will come from without – from others . . .

And sometimes they'll come from within – from the HS

You know, like – Why are you doing this? What are you trying to prove?

Where does it all end? When are you going to stop? What are you doing?

4. He may even use **drastic measures** to bring you to the end of yourself

Like the sailors did with Jonah when they *hurled him into the sea* – I think that qualifies as drastic

And though you may never be thrown into the sea, who knows what God may bring your way? Who knows what he may allow?

Who knows what he may do to get your attention and stop your flight?

A car accident? A failed business? A lost job? A death in the family?

A broken marriage? A prison sentence?

Maybe it won't even happen to you – maybe it'll happen to someone close to you

The point is – if you're running from God, you cannot hide

He'll put people in your life to wake you up, he'll expose your sin, he'll nag you with questions, and he may even take drastic measures . . .

To find you out, and turn your heart; Don't go there*****

- Come home

Home with a *capital H*; Home to the *Lord*; Home to his will

Why not put a stop to the futility of your running, but never getting away?

The hardship of rebelling, but never winning
The thrill of sinning, but never being satisfied
You can do that right now – *if* you repent and return to the Lord like Jonah

That's the only way, the only fix – to call out to the Lord like 2:1 says
The belly of Sheol being the lowest of the low

Jonah *called out to the Lord* (2a), and God heard his voice
At the worst of his worst, he repented of his sin – that's the implication of his prayer
And God answered him by restoring his life
And he'll do the same for you, if *you* repent and *you* call out to him

Which I'm going to give you an opportunity to do at the end of our service
An opp to get before the Lord, confess your sin, and make a commitment to stop
running, and come home to the Lord

Won't you do that?
If God's calling you home, if he's pursuing you, and you're tired of running . . .
Just stop, and repent; B/c there's no place to hide

With that in mind, lesson 2 is this . . .

LESSON 2 – God will save you if you ask (Ch 2-3)

Whether you're *re*-turning to the Lord, like Jonah . . .
Or turning to him for the *first* time like the Ninevites . . .
He will save you if you ask (read 2:6-10)

God will save you if you ask, b/c *salvation belongs to the Lord!* (9b)
That's what he does; That's what he offers
It was true for Jonah in *re*-turning to him . . .
And it was true for the Ninevites in *turning* to him in the first place (read 3:1-10)

V5 – The people believed God; And v8 – They called out to God, and turned from their
evil way – i.e. they repented of their sin
They believed, they called out, and they repented
And when God saw it – he relented; i.e. he *saved* them from disaster
He saved them from the punishment they deserved

- Do you realize that's the only hope *you* have of being saved?
The only hope you have of receiving God's mercy is to believe, call out, and repent
B/c like the Ninevites, you too are facing destruction

The Bible says that apart from God, we are condemned already – condemned to an
eternity in the throes of hell
Where there will be utter darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth, and terrible pain
In fact, the Bible says that the smoke of their torment, i.e. those in hell, will go up
forever and ever (Rev 14:11)

- If you've never turned from your sin – from your own way of thinking and living . . .
To God, and his way – you're facing judgment and destruction, just like the Ninevites

And your only hope of being saved, is found in – *believing* God, *calling out* to him, and
repenting of your sin and sinfulness

Believing that God sent his one and only Son, Jesus, the one to whom Jonah pointed – to
die for your sins
That's the only hope you and I have of being saved – of receiving eternal life and life to
the full, and avoiding eternal damnation
But you have to ask

You have to call on the Lord *mightily* as 3:8 says – i.e. boldly and unashamedly; with all
your heart
And *repent* of your sins – committing to turn fr them in the strength that God provides
Believing that he will save you b/c of Christ's death in your place, to take the
punishment for those sins
God will save you if you ask

- Do you know why?
B/c he hears the prayers of *desperate* people – people like yourself; people like Jonah
whose life was fainting away (2:7)

And he restores the lives of *broken* people – people in the pit of life just like Jonah (2:6)
And he fills the hearts of *hopeless* people – people like the sailors who paid regard to
vain idols, until they turned to the Lord (2:8; 1:16)
And he forgives the sins of *repentant* people – like the Ninevites (3:8b, 10a)
And he saves the souls of *believing* people (3:8) – like you
If you ask; If you call out to him mightily

- How long are you going to put that off?
How long are u going to risk eternal judgment?
How long are you going to worry about what *people* think, instead of what *God* thinks?
How long are you going to be held back by your doubts, instead of propelled forward by
your faith?
When are you going to start resting in the *assurance* of eternal life, instead of *hoping*
that you're okay, when you're really not?

Some of you need to call out to the Lord mightily – now
Some of you need to make *today* the day of your salvation
Some of you need to stop *convincing* yourself that you're saved, and *get* saved

If that's you, take advantage of this opp to come home
To get on your knees before the Lord, confess your belief, confess your sin . . .
And be saved; God will do it – if you ask

B/c his *love* is available to all; That's . . .

LESSON 3 – God's love is available to all, even you

It's freely offered, and freely received
No matter what you've done, or how bad you are – God's heart, is to love yours

- If you know the rest of the story, you know that Jonah was mad that God forgave the
Ninevites

Mad, that in his grace, and mercy, and slowness to anger, and abundant love – he would
forgive a people so despicable as them
A people who plotted evil against God; A people who exploited the helpless
A people who were cruel in war; A people who practiced idolatry, and prostitution, and
witchcraft

They were a people who were about as bad as it gets . . .
And yet God extended his love to them, even them; Despite what Jonah thought (4:11)

And he does the same for you, and for me, and for all of us
No matter how far you’ve fallen; No matter how bad you’ve been
No matter what you’ve done – God’s love is available to you, if you want it
It’s available
The only question is – Have you received it?

- If not, and you want to . . .
I’m going to ask you to get up out of your seat in a minute, come down front, and just
get on your knees before the Lord
Get on your knees to humble yourself before him, to confess your belief in him, and to
call out to him for the forgiveness of your sins
Will you do that? Will you receive his love?

And for those of you who have been running from the Lord Like Jonah, and need to
repent, you come too
Whether your heart has become hardened by the deceit of sin . . .
Or you’ve been ignoring God’s will; Or indulging in sinful lusts . . .
Come home
God’s love is available, freely so; And there’s no place to hide

So you come as I pray and the worship team sings
And as you do, one of our staff or leaders will join you, talk with you if you’d like, pray
with you, or just be there for you
Whatever the case – you come, and get right with God

- Lord, for those who are . . .
Desperate, hear them; *Broken*, restore them; *Hopeless*, fill them
Repentant, forgive them; *Believe*, save them
Stay in prayer

(Invitation)
There’s nothing magical about invitations – they’re not even in the Bible, except for
baptism
But there is something very powerful about them in leading people to Christ . . .
It forces a crisis in your heart that strips away pride, and allows you to *fully* follow
Christ, instead of worrying about what others think

If you can’t take a stand for him in here, you’ll never take a stand for him out there

Prayer of salvation – God, I’m calling out to you mightily to say . . .
I believe – I believe you, I believe your Word, and I believe in your Son, Jesus
That he died in my place for my sins . . .
And rose again to guarantee my life forever – thank you; I believe
Please forgive me of my sins – I’m done with them; I’m done living my way
I commit to live for you from now on, in the strength you provide
Come into my life, and fill me with your love – I want it, and I need it

(Col 1:21-23a) – *You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he
has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and
blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable
and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.*

- As we stand for worship, would those of you who are up front, *stay up front* with us?
(A) We want to worship with you
(B) We’d like to put some resources in your hands, and get your *contact information*, so
we can follow up with you, and encourage you in your walk with Christ