

PROCLAIMING THE BOUNDLESS GRACE OF GOD

Covenant Presbyterian Church

JONAH 3:1-10

22 September A.D. 2013

Proclaiming the boundless grace of God

The grace of God for the proclaimer (v. 1)

- Second time?!?
- Grace to us hard-hearted, hard-headed people
 - Application: We need to know that God's heart is for us. He came to Jonah a second time and in Christ He continues to come to us.

The grace of God to the proclaimers (vv. 2-4a)

- The greatness of Ninevah (v. 2)
 - Huge city, central to the Assyrian Empire.
 - They were a wicked and violent people who served the war goddess, Ishtar.
 - Jonah was ministering outside of the bounds of the known people of God.
 - Application: God calls us out of our comfort zones.
 - After School Program, Backyard Bible Club, English as a Second Language, College ministry, nursery, Children's Church...
- The Word of God to Ninevah (v.2)
 - ar 'q' – (*qara* or *cara*) “to call out or proclaim”
 - **khru, ssw** – (*kye-roos-ow*) “to proclaim aloud, announce, mention publicly, preach” most often in reference to God's saving action (Mark 1:4, 39, 45; Luke 8:39; 1 Cor. 9:27).
 - “Proclaim to it the proclamation that I tell you”
 - This time the proclamation is not “against” Ninevah, but “to” Ninevah. God's heart is for this city. There is mercy/grace/kindness in God's Word.
- The quickening of Ninevah (v. 3-4a)
 - Ninevah was ready. God prepared them. He went before His prophet and tilled the soil of the Ninevites' hearts.
 - Application: God is the one who goes before us as we proclaim His Word. It is His work of salvation.

The grace of God in the proclamation (v. 4b)

- Warning the people of Ninevah
 - Warnings are given when the one who is doing the warning wants the one warned to change his/her behavior. A warning only holds true validity if the one who is doing the warning can carry out the consequences for an unheeded warning.
 - Illustration: Disciplining children
- Blessing the people of Ninevah
 - Hearing of the judgment of God is a blessing
 - God did not bless Sodom and Gomorrah with a prophet when He “overthrew” them. The fire of His just judgment rained down upon them.
 - It's not too late to turn from your actions. It's not too late to repent!
- Blessing to us
 - John the Baptist and Jesus' message, “Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand.” (Matt. 3:2, Mark 1:15)
 - God's heart is for the salvation of His people as shown in Jonah 2:9 and in Jesus' ministry.

Responding to the boundless grace of God

Believing God (v. 5a)

- “Believed” – same word as Genesis 15:6: *And Abraham believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*
- This is not some idle belief that has no impact on anything else. The Ninevites did not intellectually weigh the options and decide that the possibility of God existed. They did not simply like the idea of God. They believed and that belief led to action and repentance.

Responding to God (v. 5b-6)

- Jonah's proclamation led to the people's responsive proclamation (“Called” – (*qara*) proclaimed)
- “*from the greatest of them to the least of them*”
 - Before the throne of God, no one has the upper hand. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Repenting to God (v. 7-9)

- The king of Ninevah exercises his authority so that everyone and everything under his command responds to God in repentance.
 - All “members” of Ninevah were called to repentance and revival. They were “members” of the city and were willing to follow the king’s proclamation to make great sacrifices by way of fasting and being clothed in sackcloth.
 - Application: We are under Christ’s authority and He has given us the church. Have you submitted to Christ’s authority and become a member of a church?
 - He calls them to action (v. 7-8a).
 - Belief and repentance begin in the heart, but they do not remain there. They must come out in actions or they cannot be considered belief or repentance (James 1-2).
 - He calls them to a change in heart (v. 8b)
 - He is not just calling them to “feel” something. This is not simply an emotional response.
 - This leads to arguably the largest revival that has ever been recorded. Certainly the greatest revival considering the size and influence of Ninevah.
 - However, it does not seem as though Ninevites repentance was passed on.
 - Application: How are you passing on your faith to the next generation?
 - He humbles himself before God (and before the people of Ninevah) (v. 9)
 - The king casts himself and his people upon the sovereign mercy of God.
 - Like David did (2 Sam. 12:22). Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did (Dan. 3:16-18). Like the prophet Joel did (Joel 2:14). Like the captain on Jonah’s ship did (Jonah 1:6).
 - Application: We want there to be a formula for repentance and revival. We want there to be a way that we can get God to do what we want Him to do. But, we are not God. We cannot even pretend to know the depths of His mind or trace flow of His plans. We come humbly before Him.

The God of boundless grace (v. 10)

- God is sovereign.
 - His heart is for the salvation of His people, His image bearers. God gives them a warning so that they will repent. He is giving us warning so that we will repent.
- Man is responsible.
 - The Ninevites must still turn and repent.
- God’s mercy and kindness reign in Ninevah.
- What happened to God’s wrath concerning the evil of the Ninevites that had come up before Him (Jonah 1:2)?
 - God’s wrath for them and for us was poured out upon Christ on the cross. The death of Jesus was and is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins – the Ninevites and ours.

Jonah 3 outlined

(A) Grace of God to Jonah: ¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out [*proclaim*] against it the message [*proclamation*] that I tell you.”

(B) Grace of God at work in Ninevah: ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. ⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey.

(C) Grace of God proclaimed And he called [*proclaimed*] out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

(D) Response of the people: ⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called [*proclaimed*] for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

(D1) Response of the king: ⁶ The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

(C1) Grace of God proclaimed: ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out [*proclaim*] mightily to God.

(B1) Grace of God at work in Ninevah: Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

(A1) Grace of God to Ninevah: ¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.