

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET
GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE

Monday, July 6

Reading: Jonah 2:10 – 3:2

Jonah 3:1 *Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."*

After Jonah's prayer, God commands the fish to vomit Jonah back on shore. The word "vomit" is always used in the Old Testament in a negative way. While God had used the fish to rescue His rebellious prophet, Jonah's ignoble ejection from the fish is still a reminder of his appalling disobedience.

We are not told exactly where the fish unloaded its human passenger, but it is logical to assume Jonah was vomited onto the beach near Joppa where he had started. The prophet had just experienced the mercy of God. His disobedience deserved the wrath of God. Instead, God sent the fish to save Jonah from drowning and return him to dry land. And God continues to show His mercy by giving Jonah another chance.

The Hebrew of verse 1 is almost exactly the same as God's first call in chapter 1. Jonah is commanded to "Arise and go to Nineveh." However, there is a slight change in the message. In chapter 1, Jonah is told to preach AGAINST the city. Now he is told to proclaim TO the city. This indicates that there was the possibility of God's wrath being averted if the people repented. After receiving God's mercy himself, Jonah should be ready to bring the possibility of God's mercy to Nineveh. The message Jonah was to preach was not of his own making. It was the "the message I give you." It was to be the very words of God!

To Jonah's credit, he gets up and goes. This was not a quick journey. From Israel, Nineveh would be almost 500 miles away – about a month-long journey. Plenty of time for Jonah to think about his experiences and consider his attitude. Sadly, as we continue the story, we realize that Jonah still harbors a merciless attitude toward Nineveh. He is outwardly obeying God's command, but his heart is still not in line with God's heart.

Why would God give Jonah a second chance? It was not that Jonah was the only man for the job. While God's mission was to show mercy to the people of Nineveh, it was also to bring Jonah back to a right relationship with Him – to the point where he sees people through God's eyes.

When we fail, we must remember that God is the God of second chances. But He wants more than simply our external obedience. He wants our hearts! He wants us to see people the way He sees them and share His love and mercy with them for the right reasons.

When has God given you a second chance?
How did it change the way you thought and acted?
How did it change your heart?