

"Jonah: The Unwilling Missionary"

Epiphany 3

1)

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

2)

January 24, 2021

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When you see or hear the word Jonah - what's the first thing that you think of? I know from when I was young it was always Jonah...and the whale that he was associated with.

But did you know that it really wasn't a whale but rather a big fish that swallowed Jonah and when you think about it, Jonah really is only about three verses long in the beginning part of this for chapter book. So what do we want to talk about and think about this morning or excuse me this evening when we think about Jonah do we want to talk just about the big fish or perhaps it would be important for us to look at the lesson that's before us here in chapter 3 really the middle part of the story of Jonah.

And today, we want to think about Jonah and his unwillingness to go as a missionary and the aspect of God's grace that goes out to all people. Now Jonah as I mentioned was very unwilling to go. In fact when he was told to go he went as far away as possible. He went to the other ends of the Earth at least at the no time the opposite end of the Mediterranean Sea he hopped on a boat. God told him to go east and he went West.

And that's really the story of Jonah disobeying God not listening to God's command to go and preach to the city of Nineveh. Now. Why would Jonah have been unwilling to go? Why didn't he want to go to this city of Nineveh? Well, if we're Packer fans here, it would be like saying go and preach to the Chicago Bears or those that live in Chicago go and preach to that most hated enemy of yours go and preach to a people and a city that you might be very uncomfortable in.

And that's what God told Jonah to go and do. And Jonah disobeyed.

As he ran far far away from God he found that his running away from God had its consequences. God saw everything that Jonah was doing and he rectified the situation by bringing a great storm to come upon the boat the ship that Jonah was on and Jonah

knew that the storm that was on the sea at that time and came upon the ship and all of its crew mates that threatened to destroy the ship and take the very life of those crewmates. Jonah knew that they had to toss them overboard and that this storm would die down. God knew that God was disappointed in him. Joe knew that his unwillingness to go and do what God had asked had its consequences now, why wouldn't Jonah want to go? Not only was it a heated City, but there was reason behind it. About 800 years before Christ is when Jonah had the privilege of going to Proclaim what the word of the Lord was told to him?

I mean, I don't know about you, but I would be very honored if I was called to go and preach as the word of the Lord was told to me. But the people of Nineveh were the very people the Assyrians and that a Syrian country that were threatening to destroy and take into captivity the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jonah was like a lot of the other Minor Prophets that we read in the Bible. The prophets Amos the prophets that we hear throughout and as you read towards the end of your Old Testament, like Amos and Hosea the prophets that were called over and over again generation after generation to Proclaim one particular message. That was a message of repentance.

Israel repent for your many sins. But Joan has caught here in this case. Slightly different wasn't it? It was called to go into foreign or enemy territory. And preached that message 40 more days and Nineveh will be overturned now. We'll get to chapter 3 here in a moment. But as he was told to go and Proclaim that message he didn't want to go and so he fled. What we know about Jonah and what we read in Chapter 2 is Jonah's plea from the belly of the fish. And after three days being in I can only imagine in the suffocating stomach of the belly of that great fish. He was spit out or vomited onto dry land. Jonah was rescued in a sense. He experienced God's grace and mercy. He had every reason to lose his life for his unwillingness and his desire to run away from God's command.

The command that went out not just to the people of Israel.

But that command to preach repentance and trust and salvation in the Lord – to people that were considered enemies and foreigners.

Now that's where we pick up our lesson here today. What did you notice from Jonah chapter 3? Well, if you start right out there in verse 1 it says word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time while I just told you why it had to come to Jonah a second time because the first time he ran away. And then message that Jonah was to go and preach was that message again 40 more days and Nineveh would be overturned. Okay, sounds like a simple task as a missionary. What are you going to expect? They say in today's day and age for us pastors as missionaries. And from what I've witnessed and experienced you can send out so many postcards a thousand of them and expect one response from it.

You can go knocking on so many doors. And yet you won't see perhaps the results that you would hope or you might. But yet God tells us to do what he tells us in his word just like he told Jonah to go and make disciples of all Nations to preach that message that God so loved the world. That God loves every single person in the world so much that he sent his one and only son to take away all their sins. Now it's interesting to think about that message that Jonah was to go and preach to isn't it? 40 more days now if you had a message of repent Turn from your Wicked Ways. Turn from your sinfulness. How long? Do you think the Lord should give you? In this instance, it's another aspect of God's grace and mercy. He didn't say repent immediately or be destroyed. Rather he gave these people time. To repent and to come to the knowledge of their savior.

It was difficult for the ninevites because of the lifestyle that they lived. One of complete Rebellion One of conquering other nations murdering destroying everything that got in its path. And this is the people that you want me to go and preach to.

Now Jonah thought to himself. I can't do it. He ran away and found the consequences and then reluctantly. He went and preached that message. What are we told?

We're told that the city of Nineveh was a very great City and don't let that word. Very lose any importance on you. It was very important to the Lord who is important to the Lord because these were people for whom God had sent the Savior these were people that God wanted to see in heaven. These were people that

God had patients on That he wanted them to come to repentance and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The first date we're told Jonah went and he preached that message. And what happened? This isn't that interesting to when you hear how Jonah went out into that City? What do you think he expected? Do you think he expected droves of people to repent immediately? No, he probably thought to himself least you would think so. It's not worth my time. Why am I going to preach to these people? Anyways, it's not worth my time to be here. These are the people who are threatening to destroy Israel and to lead us into captivity and they would years later. Why am I here? They're so wicked and vile. They don't deserve your love and your mercy Lord. Now perhaps you and I have felt like Jonah before. We've been angry with others angry with God. God why are you doing this God? Why are you allowing this in my life? And yet God over and over again like he did with Jonah like he does did with the ninevites like he does with you and me. Has patience with us. In the midst of our trials in the midst of our storms. He continues to come to us with that message not only of repentance but one of trust in the savior. Trust in and the belief that Jesus is our savior from sin.

We see what happened with the ninevites. Their attitudes changed change towards God. Now you can only imagine profit from another Nation comes to your territory again, they would have viewed Jonah as the enemy. Came and preached this message of repentance but you see and this is from history. There were times that the people of Assyria were very skeptical not only about religion.

The Ninevites were wondering why some of these bad things were happening to them? And so they heard this message. And the Holy Spirit work that repentance in their heart. We see the change in their attitude and the change in their behavior. And we're told in other parts of scripture and certainly in the New Testament how God had worked that saving faith in their hearts. They repented of their sins. They changed their life. We're told that they put on sackcloth. Now if you know anything about sack cloth that's not very comfortable. Right and it was meant to be that way. It was meant to be an aspect of depriving yourself from the

luxuries of normal clothes that we would wear. Fasting depriving yourself from food And some of the other luxuries in life. It simply they repented and believed.

Now we're told not much more here in our text about Jonah. But if you read on in chapter 4 in it, it really is a easy read and a great read if you'd like to do that here when you get home you read how Jonah was angry again?

Angry about things that he had no control over in life. And you'll read again in chapter 4 about God's mercy and Grace. Did Johnny yet again? And he see this pattern over and over and over. How God's mercy and Grace goes out to all people? It doesn't matter what race we are. It doesn't matter what culture were from it doesn't matter to God because God loves all people. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus said to his disciples go and make disciples of all Nations. Baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and of the Holy Spirit and then teaching them to obey everything. I have commanded you and surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.

The Apostle John said in Revelation. I see a great multitude of people from every race and nation and tribe and people where did John get that vision? It was in heaven.

When you think about the unwillingness and reluctance of Jonah? The times we look at our own hearts and we see yeah, there's some reluctance and unwillingness in my heart, too. Is it worth a Time Lord? Should I really go knock on another door? Should I really call that person up should I really extend that attitude of love and graciousness to my neighbor when they really haven't been a great neighbor. I mean they don't deserve it. Let me ask you this. How much patience has got had with you? And you're stubborn heart. And your selfish heart? And you're reluctant and unwilling heart. That's rebelled against God its whole life.

You think about that aspect of impatience angriness and everything else that goes with it? You see God's great love and patience for you and for me. God could love me that much. That's certainly loves others the same way. We've got loves me enough to send a savior to take away my sins. Isn't that something that God would want me in the most wonderful message in all the world.

God would want me to go and share with other people? God's desire in his heart is to not let any single person perish. But to everyone to come to that knowledge of the truth.

You see the attitudes of human beings in the attitude of Jonah you see the attitude of Jonah in our hearts.

Yet what about the attitude of God? And isn't that a more worthy and a more noble thing for us to focus on?

God's love and mercy for Jonah God's love and mercy for me. That same love and mercy he had for the people of Nineveh. That's something to Rejoice over. And that love and mercy, it's also something that God wants us to share.

Let's pray – Dear Lord Jesus, At times I'm like Jonah. I'm angry in my heart. I'm stubborn selfish and unwilling. At those times that I know that you share with me the good news of my salvation that you died to take away. All my loved me enough to have patience on me and that you continue to do. So give me a willing spirit and a willing heart to go and share that good news of Salvation with all people. Help me to do it in the same heart of love and compassion and mercy that you have for others. It's in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)

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.” ³Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days.

⁴On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” ⁵The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.