

Way Down in the Middle of the Ocean
Jonah on the Run

Introduction: New series (children too) speaks to the issue of what it means to engage the mission of God and say “yes” to God’s call on your life.

- Not all are called to be a pastor or to vocational ministry.
- All are called to engage the world with the Gospel.
- Our call is not to build a big audience!
- Instead, we are called to build a great army!

Story of Jonah

I. Jonah—The Son of Amittai

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai. Jonah 1:1 NKJV

A. What most of us know about Jonah

1. God called him.
2. He said, “no!”
3. Swallowed by a fish and in its belly for 3 days.

B. Many get hung up there—IMPOSSIBLE!

NOTE: Not a story about a big fish—it’s a story about a big God.

C. Is this really hard to believe?

1. Genesis 1:1
2. Virgin birth
3. Return of Christ
4. If we believe these—is this too hard?
5. Is there a God at work in the world?
6. Is He revealed in Jesus Christ?

D. Some say a parable

1. Names and dates written as history
2. Jonah, the son of Amittai

He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher. 2 Kings 14:25-26 NKJV

3. Jesus considered it history

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. Matthew 12:41 NKJV

For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. Luke 11:30 NKJV

II. Jonah—A Prophet Called by God

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." Jonah 1:2 NKJV

- A. Nineveh—(great and wicked city)
 - 1. Great (huge) 3 days from side to side
 - 2. Wicked—Assyrian capital (skin alive, skin over heads, bring up to heads, tongues nailed, raped women and girls).
- B. Enemies of Israel—committed atrocities on them—Jonah called to them.
- C. Later—Jonah afraid will repent/be forgiven—who can blame him?

III. Jonah—A Man On The Run

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3 NKJV

- A. Beginning of rebellion—God said “go”—he went the other way—Tarshish 1500 miles away from Nineveh
- B. Regardless of what you do FOR God, if you reject His Lordship it’s rebellion
 - 1. He was one of Israel’s promised prophets
 - 2. Preached during crucial time for Israel
 - 3. But he said, “no” to God

Tozer—“You are never further away from God than when you are close to Him and say, “no!”

4. You can look and act good but are there areas in which YOU are saying, “no”?
 - a. Serving?
 - b. Relationships?
 - c. Forgiveness?
 - d. Missions?
 - e. Giving?

C. **There was a ship ready to go**

1. Always will be
2. Phony excuses
 - a. “I had peace.”
 - b. “It may be God’s will!”
3. We have an enemy whose job it is to have a ship ready for you to run from God!
4. God’s word, not peace in our own hearts, should guide our conduct.
5. Peace may be a conscience numbed by Satan.

IV. **Jonah—A Man in Decline**

But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. Jonah 1:4-5 NKJV

- A. Pagan sailors calling on their gods.
- B. While they have a theological crisis the man with a word from God has gone down into the boat.
- C. Yarad—v. 3, 5—decline or sink
- D. Begins with rebellion—ends in disaster
- E. A drift downward

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Hebrews 2:1 NKJV

V. Jonah—The Reason of Divine Judgment

So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." 7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Jonah 1:6-10 NKJV

A. OUR disobedience affects others

1. Parents
2. Leaders

(ILL) Flight Masks First

QUESTION: Who is dying around you because of your disobedience?

B. Storms often come to break our selfish and arrogant confidence.

1. If Word and Spirit don't break us—God may use a storm.
2. It will be clear (you will know) if this is the case with you.

C. Had Jonah fought the storm it would have killed him and all on the boat.

NOTE: He surrendered and it became his salvation.

VI. Jonah—The Man Overboard

Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" — for the sea was growing more tempestuous. 12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." 15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. Jonah 1:11-16 NKJV

- A. Sailors wanted to save Jonah.
- B. In a rowing contest with god—you will always lose.
- C. Funny moment: Jonah thrown in—storm stops—relief—fish swallows him
- D. Next week we pick up there

Conclusion:

A. Jonah reveals the profound gravity of sin.

- 1. He was upstanding otherwise but failed here.
- 2. Two outcomes if he preached in Nineveh.
 - a. Would not repent—kill him
 - b. Would repent—bad for Israel if they prospered
 - c. Jonah might lose job—sense of identity
- 3. Are we willing to obey even if it costs us everything?
- 4. Ran from the presence of God (v. 3) (panim—face)
- 5. When what he loved the most went one direction and God's face the other, he chose what he loved the most.

TRUE OBEDIENCE

Loving the face and presence of God so much that you will turn from what you love the most.

(ILL) 3 Hebrew Children

(ILL) Still today on Yom Kippur

“We are Jonah!” We are arrogant people unwilling to leave all for God.

B. Jonah reminds us of the depth of God's saving work.

- 1. Jonah and God felt differently about Nineveh.
- 2. Jonah and Jesus compared

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. Matthew 12:39-41 NKJV

- 3. Jonah did all wrong.
- 4. Jesus did all right.

I am Jonah! I am also Nineveh!

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5. Cannot really be on mission until you have experienced His grace.

Final Thoughts

1. Some in Jonah's place saying, "no!"
2. Some in a storm.
3. Can go to the deck and surrender now before we get tossed into the sea.

TRUTH: You can't run from God—He's on your heels!

Trying to Hide from God

It is said that Dr. Mortimer Adler suddenly left a discussion group at a tea quite disgusted, slamming the door after him. One person trying to relieve the tension, remarked, "Well, he's gone." To this the hostess replied, "No, he isn't. That's a closet!" We share the same plight when we attempt to rush from God's presence. We are confined to ourselves.