

One of the things that is not easy to establish in our homes is a family devotion. I know without a doubt that it not only brought us closer to God but brought us closer to each other as well.

So this morning I want to simply illustrate what Don and I have done.

We usually read out of two different versions of the Bible and we often take turns reading. As we read, we often say, "Wait, this is how it reads in my Bible," and when a thought or expression has an impact on us or we question something we will often stop each other and make a comment. It's not a marathon and we don't have to get through a certain amount of scripture on a given day. Just let it speak to you.

In my own devotion time, I will often have a notebook handy and I will write the scripture and beside it I will write initial thoughts.

We both have study Bibles in different versions and we will often read the back ground or foot notes.

This morning we want to go to a portion of scripture that is very familiar.

If you were raised in the church & even if you weren't, you have heard stories or songs about Jonah and the whale.

Who did who did who did who did

Who did swallow Jo Jo Jonah?

There is controversy between scholars. Some will tell you that this is all just allegory or a parable--that this really didn't happen. But most scholars embrace this as an actual event in history. I'm there with them. Two reasons...Nothing is impossible with God and the God who created the world could very well have created a big fish that could hold a man for three days. Secondly, listen what Jesus Himself said in Matt 12:40.....

He refers to it as a literal event in history...something that actually happened. Hardly would He have used a parable as a sign for a generation.

With all of that, you know we are going to the book of Jonah. It's not an easy book to find. It's very short and tucked away in the minor prophets right after Amos and Obadiah.

Let me give you just a little backdrop. Jonah was a prophet of God and he had been one whom God had used to prophecy to the nation of Israel that their borders would be restored. Though King Jeroboam II was not a good king, God allowed him to lead Israel and gave him victory in pushing back other nations. With the expansion of this territory came peace and prosperity. But as so often happen, we think peace and prosperity is God's favor and we become lax in our ways. Soon after Israel triumphed they began to gloat over the favor they had with God and gloried in the fact that God would destroy other nations and spare them.

Not only did they let their guard down, they let sin in.

How often do I see that in my own life? Something major happens in my life and I seek God face and cry out to Him and make promises. "If you heal my child..... and then when the crisis is past and it has been obvious that God has heard we find ourselves slipping back to old ways...drifting...dabbling...allowing sin to crouch at our doors. God send prophets to Israel to let them know that He would no longer spare them and in fact they would be led into captivity.

What I find incredible and emphasizes the character of My God... it was at this time that God sent Jonah to a gentile city to warn them that they were about to be destroyed. Nineveh was not in Israel. Remember that as we read this narrative. In mercy—In love—He sends Jonah to this city.

## Jonah's Disobedience

**1** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,<sup>2</sup>"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."<sup>3</sup>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.

Mine reads... VS 3 "from the presence of the Lord" remember that Jonah was God's prophet... this was his calling. But Jonah...thinking he was outsmarting God, made a commitment to something else...He paid the fare. Sometimes when we hear God speaking to us we do this same kind of thing. We try not to listen...we get busy or go shopping. It seems so foolish when we see it here in black and white, but we do it.

## The Storm at Sea

<sup>4</sup>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.

The God who creates—uses the storms—natural phenomenon to send a message.

<sup>5</sup>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.<sup>[a]</sup> But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

I often do that when I am trying to escape something...I just want to go to sleep.

<sup>6</sup>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."

<sup>7</sup>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. "casting lots" <sup>8</sup>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?"

<sup>9</sup>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*."

## Jonah Thrown into the Sea

<sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>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."

The Version up on the screen reads: I know that it is because of me that this great storm *has come upon you.*" Do we realize that our disobedience puts the lives of others in danger as well?

<sup>13</sup>Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.

Do you ever do that? Try harder? Is there a sin in your life you are trying to control? But they could not.

Sometimes truthfully, I don't know how to give up. I don't know how to fully surrender a thing to God. Throwing a man overboard during a raging storm is drastic. I think about when Dan was drinking, He tried harder for years and years. There were times he limited himself and tried to cut down to only fail. Giving up 30 days of his life to go to treatment was drastic. We can make up 1000s of excuses why we can't do that. But Wow! I wish I could show you the before and after of Dan's life....it's night and day.

Can I just say that this story of Jonah has within it several stories? Yes, there is the story of Jonah but there is also the story of God...the story of the sailors...the story of the people of Nineveh...the story of a king and our story as well.

This story of Jonah also reminds me of what happens to us in salvation. The men on this boat had a verses before encounter Jonah's God.

There comes a time in our lives when we see what's going on...we see the sin in our lives and we know we need a Savior. And we know it's something we need to do and so we have that initial moment of salvation. Absolutely there is a change in our lives. We are so aware of God. His Holy Spirit is all over us. We know when we do wrong, but there is a storm raging all around us and sometimes in us. We've given God our lives we believe that Jesus died on the cross for us but like Paul the things we want to do we don't and the things we don't want to do, we do...

Are you at a place where you've accepted Jesus as your Savior and you think, Wow! There had to be more to it than this. There is.....

You've accepted Christ into your life but you're still on the throne. You're even trying harder but going nowhere. You've got to get off the throne and let God reign. Full surrender! In the church of the Nazarene we call this entire sanctification. A place where we are all in and God is God! We interviewed a pastor for ordination this past week and when he was giving his testimony to us He said that though he had been raised in a pastor's home he wanted fire insurance but didn't want to give up the fun.

It has to be total surrender...total obedience...sometimes you have to throw the man overboard...It'll change your life.

<sup>14</sup>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." <sup>15</sup>So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup>Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

## Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

<sup>17</sup>Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**2** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. <sup>2</sup>And he said:

"I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,  
And He answered me.

"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
*And* You heard my voice.

<sup>3</sup>For You cast me into the deep,  
Into the heart of the seas,  
And the floods surrounded me;  
All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

<sup>4</sup>Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;  
Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

<sup>5</sup>The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul;  
The deep closed around me;  
Weeds were wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup>I went down to the moorings of the mountains;  
The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever;  
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,  
O LORD, my God.

<sup>7</sup>"When my soul fainted within me,  
I remembered the LORD;  
And my prayer went *up* to You,  
Into Your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup>"Those who regard worthless idols  
Forsake their own Mercy. **Don't you love the way it says that in  
Don's version? We hold on to our sin and we forfeit the  
grace that could be ours.**

<sup>9</sup>But I will sacrifice to You  
With the voice of thanksgiving;

I will pay what I have vowed.  
Salvation *is* of the LORD.”

<sup>10</sup>So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*.

*Sounds like repentance...let's see if it is.*

## Jonah Preaches at Nineveh

**3** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,<sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” **I love the God of second chances!** <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey <sup>in extent</sup>. <sup>4</sup>And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

## The People of Nineveh Believe

<sup>5</sup>So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup>Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he caused *It* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. <sup>8</sup>But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

<sup>10</sup>Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

**True repentance means that we turn—not just be sorry but we make a radical change.**

## Jonah's Anger and God's Kindness

**4** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.<sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!"

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said, "*Is it* right for you to be angry?"

<sup>5</sup>So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD God prepared a plant<sup>6a</sup>and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.<sup>7</sup>But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. <sup>8</sup>And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "*It is* better for me to die than to live."

<sup>9</sup>Then God said to Jonah, "*Is it* right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "*It is* right for me to be angry, even to death!"

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup>And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

This last chapter is a mirror into our own hearts...Jonah was doing what God wanted him to do, but he was angry about it. His heart wasn't changed...only his mind.

Though God was merciful...his mercy went further than we sometimes want it to go... His mercy exposes our true hearts.

This story also exposes my calloused heart.

We are so consumed with what affects us and what we get out of life. It's all about us...

Think about your neighbors. And probably all of us have that one neighbor that could sure use a dose of God. I don't want you to think of that one. When is the last time you prayed for them...Someone in your own circle of life? Who knows they too might be changed?

They believed...this city which Jonah had tried to run from believed and repented. Does that remind you of a person that maybe God has been talking to you about talking to or inviting to church? But we think they are too ingrained with sin.

Let's just be obedient