



## Jonah Thanksgiving Sermon/Lesson 2024

Preached at Maxwell and Kilby Nov/Dec 2024

### Jonah Chapter 1

**Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. <sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so, he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.**

God wants Jonah to do a work for him. How awesome is that. God wants Jonah to preach in Nineveh and warn them so they can repent and be saved.

Whatever God wanted him to do, Jonah didn't want to do it, so he runs from the presence of God. He is running in the wrong direction....going down instead of heading up.

He pays to get a ship ride to Tarshish. That's 1,500 miles away in the opposite direction. He ain't running to God, he is getting as far away as he can from doing what God wants him to do.

That was then, this is now. Let's get on the ship with Jonah. Have you ever taken that kind of boat ride.

- Many people still run from God today because they don't want to do what He is asking. People don't want to be in His presence when they want to do what they want to do.
- There are times when I don't want God to be around or see.
- I made this trip before, I've been on this ship. God wants me to do something and I don't want to obey God, so I'm trying to move as far away as I can from what God wants me to do.
  - I'm trying to get away from forgiving somebody.
  - I'm trying to get away from doing more than just showing up for church.
  - I'm trying to get away from being a good husband.
  - Anybody ever taken a ride on this ship? Some of us are on it now.

**<sup>4</sup> But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.**

Jonah's disobedience and run from God has now placed those around him in danger. Some key observations:

- The ride started out smooth but soon got rough.
- No matter how hard he tried, he could not hide from the Lord.
- God commands natural events to occur to hinder Jonah's escape and continued disobedience.

- Even though it looks like God is about to destroy, we see his mercy in that the ship was in great danger but not yet broken. Question – why didn't God just go ahead and sink it...what do you think He is waiting for or trying to achieve? Because He is long suffering....trying to give you time to get yourself together and come correct. Just obey God.
- Jonah is chill while all this is going on. He is totally unaware it seems that he is in danger or that he has caused others to suffer distress and significant loss as a result of his actions.

Jonah was the reason for the storm. If he had just obeyed God, the sailors wouldn't be in trouble, tripping, or losing their stuff. Throwing stuff overboard because of the storm.

Application for today – that was then, this is now:

I been on this boat and I've been in this storm. Some times I've caused the storm, often, others have caused the storms I've experienced.

- Our decisions and disobedience can indeed impact others. When we are disobedient and/or moving outside the will of God, it will often cause others to go through a storm.
- I have caused a few storms in my day. Ask the parents, ask the kids, ask the wife, ask some of the folks on my job.
- Folks I know losing stuff because of my storm.
- Folks around me scared because of my actions.
- While folks around me are going through, I'm chill.
- I didn't know the impact I was having until somebody told me to wake up.

This is a sad example of a Christian today. That they will do nothing to assist those who they can see are struggling around them. As long as I'm not caught, I'm chill

**<sup>6</sup>So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. <sup>7</sup>And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. <sup>8</sup>Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?**

**<sup>9</sup>And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. <sup>10</sup>Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.**

Jonah's response is that he is a Hebrew....Notice he seems to proclaim boldly that he fears the great God of heaven who controls everything and is even the Master of the situation or storm they are now in.

Oh, Jonah knows God and he is talking real good about God. He knows God, can tell you about God. But he still ain't obeying God. You can talk a good game and still find yourself in a storm.



Notice how the lost in this example have more fear demonstrated than the believer.....they are afraid while Jonah is still talking a good game.

Finally, we have the key question to get to the root cause....why has Jonah done this? Why is he running from what God told him to do (disobedient)? If he truly feared God like that, why does he show no fear in disobeying this great God? If God is really all that in your life, why are you doing this?

Hypocrites can cause more damage to the Kingdom because unbelievers see the behavior today and ask the same questions.

**<sup>11</sup> Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.**

The men ask another good question, what do we need to do to get out of this storm?

The Man of God knew the cause and the answer. Application, often through the word and our relationship with God, we Christians may have the answer to the storms and challenges of life that others who are about to perish may need to hear.

Jonah tells them the answer for peace. It seems a quite noble and heroic gesture.

This is not the answer the men want to hear, so they continue to try their best to use their strength and wisdom to make it safely to land and survive this great storm....but they cannot. Too much was working against them. Our efforts working against God on our own to resolve our problems in the end will fail and we will have put forth much wasted effort.

Application for Today:

- Looking at this story, we have probably all been in this same situation.
- We will and may be facing storms and situations in life that we are not able to handle; we see no way out.
- We may humbly seek answers and relief from God and receive an answer from the Bible, the Holy Spirit, a sermon, another saint, etc., but the answer or what we are called to do may not be what we want to do, or it may not make much sense.
- The longer we wait to obey, the more wasted effort, the more we tire, the longer we remain in the storm, the longer we can't find peace, the longer our breakthrough is delayed, the longer we remain outside and fighting against the perfect will and plan of God.
- Some things that don't make sense, we may have to let go of and cast overboard. We may not want to do it, but in the end if it was according to God's plan....it will always turn out for our good in the end.

**<sup>14</sup> Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. <sup>15</sup> So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.**

The men engage God before acting. They want to make sure they will not be at fault and in alignment with God. After calling upon God humbly, they cast Jonah overboard and immediately they experience peace and the storm is over.

That was then, this is now. Someone has made a sacrifice for you so that you can be saved from the storm you are in.

I thank God that Jesus made a sacrifice for me in the middle of my storm. Jesus went overboard for me.

When we are okay with God in obedience to Him, we can expect peace. If God caused the storm, then He still had control of the storm. So, if the storm stopped, God must have stopped the storm He created. Now let's see why God would have stopped the storm....because somebody obeyed and fell into alignment with His plan. Obedience and spiritual alignment pleases God and brings about immediate change and His peace.

**<sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.**

After obedience, they see a great move of God. God did something in their lives, saved their lives, brought peace in their lives. This miracle in their lives caused them to fear and reverence God, worship Him only, and commitment themselves to Him. Their obedience prompted both a physical and spiritual salvation.

Oh, it can be a wild ride but is anyone ready to get out of the storm God has allowed to come your way? Notice, if they had never been through the storm, they never would have started to worship the living God.

Your storms can have a peaceful ending. Someone got blessed because of this. I lost some stuff in the storm, but I picked up something more valuable...a relationship and a future with the living God.

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

What God prepared to protect and keep Jonah was not the Ritz. However, it was quite sufficient for several reasons as I see. It worked, it was free, and it created the three steps in three nights that Jonah needed to get back in alignment with God and perform His ministry. This great fish becomes the place of his baptism.

Matthew 12:40 – see reference here.

- Jesus compares his mission and process steps with Jonah and his story and time in the whale. Why does he make this comparison? Perhaps he is showing us that everyone who will be his disciple will spend some time in the whale. What is the name of your dark place or your place of

greatest need? The time in the whale is part of the process of getting into alignment with God and getting prepared to do something great for the Kingdom.

Update: So, while teaching this lesson, one student (Davy) asked a very significant question, if Jonah knew the sea would be calm if he was thrown overboard, why didn't he just jump overboard himself? When addressing this question, the class saw a connection in the spiritual realm. It was better for the crew to accept the sacrifice of Jonah by believing that the sacrifice of his life would save them. They had to cease from their own efforts and make a choice to believe in his sacrifice. Likewise, we have a decision and a choice to make. Will we continue to try and work ourselves out of the storm, or will we make a decision to accept the sacrifice of Christ to save us from the storms?

- If Jonah jumps in on his own, it takes away the opportunity for the sailors to step out on faith and it hinders them from going through the process.
- We have a choice to make.

ChapGPT Results:

### **Spiritual Significance**

1. **A Lesson in Responsibility:** Jonah's refusal to jump could symbolize a recognition of accountability. He acknowledges his guilt but leaves the act of casting him overboard to others, showing that he accepts the judgment of others and, by extension, of God.
2. **Faith in God's Plan:** Jonah might have believed that the situation required divine orchestration. Instead of acting impulsively, he submits to a process where God's will can unfold visibly to all involved, including the sailors.
3. **Symbol of Human Resistance:** Jonah's hesitation might reflect humanity's tendency to avoid direct confrontation with the consequences of disobedience, even when we know what must be done. By waiting to be thrown overboard, he illustrates the inner struggle between self-preservation and surrender.

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### **Foreshadowing of Redemption**

The act of being thrown overboard (rather than jumping) can also be seen as foreshadowing Christ's sacrificial death. Just as Jonah was cast into the sea to save others, Christ allowed Himself to be "given up" to save humanity. The parallel emphasizes surrender to divine will rather than human initiative.

In essence, Jonah's decision to wait could hold layers of meaning about surrender, divine authority, and the human condition. It invites readers to consider how they respond to responsibility, divine correction, and the need for faith in difficult circumstances.

## Jonah Chapter 2

**Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, <sup>2</sup> And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. <sup>3</sup> For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. <sup>4</sup> Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.**

Then....it is after all this that Jonah begins to pray a powerful prayer. Notice key points here:

- He prayed to God out of the fish's belly – no matter where you are, you can still pray, and God will hear you from that place, situation, and condition.
- Even though his failure and disobedience landed him in a bad place, God was still his God.
- Humility – it is his current condition and affliction that has caused him to recognize he needs God. In the middle of this situation, he knows that if he calls upon God....God will hear him.
  - No matter what our current condition from our failures and bad decisions, when we humbly cry out to God.....He hears us.
  - How do I know Jonah is humble....because he is no longer trying to work this problem out on his own....he goes to his God.
  - No longer running from God, he is running to God.
- He knows God hears him before he sees results – when we come correctly, God hears our cries.
- He acknowledges that his problem is too big. The situation is over his head.
- He acknowledges his mistakes have caused him to be cast away from His presence, yet instead of trying to solve this in his own strength or give up....he looks to God.
- Step 1 – completed.

**<sup>5</sup>The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. <sup>6</sup>I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.**

Jonah is buried even to the soul. This reflects that his mind, self, feelings, intellect, all the other functions in the soulish realm are no longer in play. This includes his prejudice against Nineveh, all of this is buried in baptism. He is dead and buried, symbolically just as we are to be dead and buried in Christ (Romans Chapter 6). Yet God will bring him back to from death.

Step 2 – completed.

Note: Several commentaries observe that Jonah's prayer has some of the same language from the Psalms. It is a good thing to have the word hid in your heart so you can pray the word in times of need.



Why does he pray from the Psalms? We believe he must have remembered that David was once on the run and in a difficult situation in exile. David wrote these psalms and in the end, he becomes the king and is delivered. Jonah must have believed that if God did it for David, perhaps if he followed these steps, God would make it happen for him as well. There is an application for us today....follow the steps.

Psalms 42:7, Psalm 69:1, Psalm 18:6

**<sup>7</sup>When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. <sup>8</sup>They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. <sup>9</sup>But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.**

When all hope was lost and he could no longer rely on physical strength or mental toughness from the soulful realm, then he remembered the promises of God. He repents and changes his mind...he repents from trusting in himself and his feelings and places his hope in God.

Those that obey lies and vain things, impulses, and ideas contrary to the will of God surrender the mercy God has for them. What they are holding onto and observing is vain and worthless in the end, they should rather value the mercy of God higher.

- Regardless of your situation, even if you have nothing in your hand to give....you can still bring a sacrifice to God. Jonah brings a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.
- Notice the powerful position Jonah now finds himself in....he thanks God even though his physical circumstances and condition remains unchanged. He was able to find something to be thankful for even in this situation....wow! Powerful application for today....despite our problems....can we thank God for anything? Yes, even our very salvation!

See 2 Corinthians 4:7-11, we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair.....

Notice something. Jonah says he will sacrifice to God. But he ain't got nothing to give to God. He just lost everything, so he doesn't have anything to give to God....except....praise and thanksgiving.

- Still in confinement, but giving thanks.
- Still in a bad and dangerous place, but giving the sacrifice of praise.
- Still broke as a joke, but still has something that God desires.
- Still separated from others, but still able to give thanks.
- That's crazy thanks.

How? Jonah must know something about God. He has a word and a song to encourage him. He knows that if he comes correct, God will come see about him. He knows that if he follows the steps, God will hear him. He knows while God will allow him to be brought down, that the same God will lift him up. He knows that God still saves.

That was then, this is now.



I don't know the name of your whale or big fish. But you may be in a difficult and uncomfortable situation or place. You sure didn't plan to be in that place.

Everybody has a whale of a story. How will yours end.

Disobedience and running from God may have landed you in that place. Some folks might have given up on you and thrown you overboard. It looks like you will never recover from this, in fact, you ain't supposed to recover and survive the mess you are in.

- But God allowed Jonah to get swallowed up and spend some uncomfortable time in the darkness of the whale. That was then, this is now.
- Somebody knows about being in a dark place. Uncomfortable place, Dangerous place. Difficult place.
- But if Jonah had never been in that place, he never would have been able to praise God and give thanks in that place.
- Can you give God thanksgiving and praise in your whale?

**<sup>10</sup> And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.**

Jonah goes through the first three steps. He speaks first to God, then God speaks to the fish, then Jonah is saved and safe. Now he is ready for ministry to others.

Sometimes we must go through some things before we are truly ready to do a work for God. Prayer is an important part for our breakthrough.

That was then, this is now. If He did it for Jonah, He will do it for you. If I follow the process, and speak to God, God will speak to my problem.

It might last longer than I wanted, but I can give Him thanks today, because I know how this is supposed to turn out. My praise and thanksgiving is about to release me from my problem.

Your praise and sacrifice of thanksgiving will allow God to speak to your problem and put you on dry ground.

I'm going to praise Him and give Him thanks now in advance. Before He takes care of my problem, I thank Him for hearing me right now, for giving me another chance, and I'm thankful for what He is going to do.

God is about to speak to my problem and when I'm released from my whale, I'll land on dry ground. I'm starting to feel just a little bit better about my captivity because God is taking me through a process and His process always results in peace.

The fish wasn't the end, just the beginning of a break through.



**ChapGPT Results:**

**Sermon Title: "Thankful in the Deep: Jonah's Prayer of Gratitude"**

**"Thanksgiving isn't about where you are—it's about the posture of your heart."**

- **Jonah prayed a prayer of thanksgiving, not from comfort or freedom, but from the belly of a fish.**
  - **Jonah's story shows that gratitude can arise even in the depths of despair.**
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**I. Gratitude Begins with Remembering God's Mercy (Jonah 2:1–4) (8 minutes)**

**Key Point: Gratitude starts when we focus on what God has done for us, even in hard times.**

- 1. Jonah remembers God:**
    - **He acknowledged that God heard him even when he was "banished" from God's sight**
  - 2. Application for inmates:**
    - **In the middle of confinement or feeling distant from family and freedom, remember that God hears you when you pray.**
  - 3. Encouragement:**
    - **Being in a difficult place does not mean God has abandoned you. His mercy meets you where you are.**
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**Key Point: Trusting God for deliverance transforms despair into hope.**

- 1. He trusted that God would bring him up "from the pit."**
- 2. Application for inmates:**
  - **Life in prison might feel like being in a pit, but God's deliverance isn't just physical—it's spiritual.**
  - **Trust God to deliver you from anger, guilt, or hopelessness. He's working on your heart even now.**
- 3. Encouragement:**

- Thanksgiving grows when you focus on what God *can do* rather than what you cannot control.
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**1. Encouragement:**

- Gratitude isn't just a feeling; it's a decision to trust and honor God, even when life is uncertain.
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**Key Point:** Thanksgiving opens the door for God's new beginnings.

**1. Application for inmates:**

- Gratitude today can prepare your heart for the new opportunities God has for you.
  - See each day as a second chance to grow, heal, and serve others—even while you're here.
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**Conclusion and Practical Application (5–7 minutes)**

**1. Summarize Jonah's Thanksgiving:**

- Gratitude remembers God's mercy, trusts His deliverance, surrenders to His will

**2. Practical Steps for Gratitude Today:**

- **Reflect:** Think of one way God has shown mercy in your life.
- **Pray:** Thank God for hearing you and being with you, even in difficult circumstances.
- **Act:** Show gratitude by encouraging a fellow inmate or writing a note of thanks to someone who has supported you.
- "This Thanksgiving, don't focus on what you don't have. Focus on the God who never leaves you and gives you reasons to be thankful, even in the deep."

