



Jonah and the City

Oct 15: Confessing what God Wants Us to Confess

Series Summary: The book of Jonah can feel so foreign to us. A prophet long ago sent to a faraway land was swallowed up by a whale. What could this have to do with us? Everything. Just as Jonah was, we are called to go where God calls us to, wrestle with our own sinful motives, and love difficult and even hurtful people. In this series, we will both see ourselves in Jonah's life and learn from his mistakes.

Big Idea: Unfortunately, we do not always get it right when it comes to submitting to God's will. When that happens, what do we do? What do we do when we have blatantly fallen short of God's standard for our lives?

Schedule:

- Live teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

Tie-in from last week: Last week, we saw in Jonah chapter one that we do not get to determine how, when, or if we submit fully to God's will. Refusing to submit to God's will has consequences, both for us and others. Unfortunately, we do not always get it right when it comes to submitting to God's will. When that happens, what do we do? What do we do when we have blatantly fallen short of God's standard for our lives? Jonah chapter two helps us answer that question.

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

God showed mercy. God could have let Jonah drown and been perfectly justified in doing so. Remember that Jonah completely ran and disobeyed God up to this

point. That would have been just. But it is good news that God is not only just, but also merciful and gracious. That must be the first thing that we remember when we fall short of fully submitting to God's will. There is grace!

What to look for as we continue: What did Jonah get right in this confession, and what did he get wrong?

Jonah 2:1-3 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. **2** He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

He recognized God's correction for what it was. Jonah was not baffled as to why he found himself in the intestinal tract of a whale. He was 100% that God had put him there.

Jonah 2:4-6 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' **5** The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. **6** To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.

Jonah trusted that even in his seemingly helpless situation, **God was able to both forgive and restore him.**

Jonah 2:7-9 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. **8** "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. **9** But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"

Jonah's prayer ends with a shout. As he has been piecing together the constituent parts of a doctrine of grace, the wonder of it dawns on him, and in a climactic statement he says, "Salvation comes only from the LORD" (verse 9). Some have called this text the central verse of the Scriptures, or at least, it expresses with great economy of language the main point of the entire Bible. It says, literally, that salvation is of the Lord, and the prepositional phrase denotes possession.¹¹ Salvation belongs to God alone, to no one else. If someone is saved, it is wholly God's doing. **It is not a matter of God saving you partly and you saving yourself**

partly. No. God saves us. We do not and cannot save ourselves. That's the gospel."¹

Jonah 2:10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Don't miss the miracle: So many people think that the great miracle here is that Jonah was saved by this fish vomiting him up on dry land. By all means, when Jonah retold this story later on in life, that would be the part that would stick out to most people. But that was a secondary miracle at best. **The true miracle was that Jonah's heart of stone and rebellion began to soften as he came face to face with his own sin and the overwhelming mercy of God.** A man who feared God's mercy being shown to Nineveh began to see that he was the one in need of God's mercy first and foremost.

Transition to small Group: If we are to obey God's will in our lives, we must confess and repent of what he does not bring him honor and glory. But there are key mindsets that hinder us from doing just that.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get them talking: How do you know if a prayer of confession, or even a simple apology is sincere? What are the signs?

Look back at Jonah's prayer in chapter 2. Was there anything that was missing from Jonah's prayer of confession and repentance? Do you notice anything?

Leader Note: While Jonah acknowledged that idols keep us from God's love in verse eight, he had failed to identify his own. Jonah never called out his specific sin by name. This could be a key reason why, when the Ninevites repented of their sin in front of him, he became bitter and angry. (We'll see this next week). He never repented of his specific sins: bitterness, anger, hatred, and pride. More on that next week.

Recap from last week (prodigal son): The younger of two sons disrespectfully asks for his inheritance from his father, which is him essentially saying “I’m getting impatient waiting for you to pass away, so I want my financial share of the inheritance now”. The son runs off to blow all of his money on debauchery and wild living, but then eventually loses all of it. He was so desperate in his poverty that he started working with pigs and eating their food (pigs were thought of as very unclean animals that no Jew should associate with). The son was now at rock bottom, and begins to consider going back home with his tail between his legs.

READ: Luke 15:17-24 together as a group

- Reminder: we are pairing Jonah with the parable of the prodigal son for small group discussion.

Vs 18-19: How would you describe the son's plan for getting back his father's love?

Vs 22-24: Depending on your group you can ask one, or both, of the next two questions:

- **What about the father's response stands out to you?**
- **If you were the father, what would you say, or how would you react seeing this ungrateful child of yours coming back to you?**

Why is the father's response so incredible, or possibly even baffling?

Leader Note: The father not only welcomes his son back home, but he treats him like royalty- he puts a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, and throws this massive celebration in his name. The son obviously doesn't deserve this type of treatment, but he receives it due to his father's love and joy for his son. The father's love greatly outweighs the disappointment or rage that he would understandably have towards his son.

The son thought he could not be forgiven and would not be admitted as a son again. His speech on the way home reveals this. He planned on begging for mercy as a servant rather than a son. The father would have none of it, referring to him only as his son (vs 24). **How should the truth that our status as sons and daughters (adopted of Children of God) change how we view confession and repentance?**

Leader Note: Even though our shame and regret speaks very loudly to us at times, we should not hesitate to go to the Lord with our confession and repentance. We should actually act quickly in this action of confession and repentance, before we start believing the lies that our shame and guilt tries to sell us (“I’m too broken for God”, “God wants nothing to do with a sinner like me”, “there’s no way God can love me now”, etc). Just like in the parable the father doesn’t just wait for us, he meets us

where we're at. His grace and love are waiting for us, and that is something we should anticipate remembering and receiving in times of regret and shame.

The Father rejoiced at his son's arrival. A celebration instantly begins at the father's command. This reflects God's response to our willing confession and repentance of sin. **How should this fact shape how we approach confession and repentance?**

Leader Note (Context): Luke 15 contains multiple parables describing joyous responses to the lost being found. Luke 15:8-10 states, *"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins[a] and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* While we should take confession and repentance seriously, it should bring us deep joy to know that God, the creator of the universe, celebrates when we return to him.

For the prodigal son, his questioning of his worthiness to be forgiven and his father's unending love hindered him from going back to his father sooner. **What are some other mindsets that can hinder us from regularly confessing and repenting of our sin?**

Introspective Question (Wrap up): What sin or regret have you been holding on to that needs to be released to the Lord? What do you need to confess to Jesus today, so that you can return to a healthy faith where shame and regret no longer hold you down?