



Jonah and the City

Oct 8: Where God Wants Us to Go

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: Living for Jesus isn't always easy. There will be times when following Jesus means that we have to give something up. Are we willing to give up parts of our lives in order to follow Jesus?

Schedule:

- Live teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

Series Lead in: 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.

Intro: You always hear Christians saying how they want to follow what God has for them. Whether Jonah felt this way also isn't mentioned, but God gave him a destination that he didn't quite like. His response was the exact opposite of what we should do when God calls us to go somewhere or to do something.

Jonah 1:1-2 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

Nineveh is one of the most gruesome civilizations ever known in human history. They were as wicked and evil as you could imagine. To put it lightly, they were a terrorist state during this age. On top of this Nineveh also would continually threaten the Jewish northern kingdom during the time of Jonah...These guys were terrifying and not to be messed with.

- Yet, God tells Jonah to go and preach against these people.
- **Transition** - With that as the backdrop, Jonah's response begins to make a bit more sense...

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Rebellion via geography: It's not just that Jonah said “no”. It's that he physically ran in the opposite direction...as far away as you possibly could.

- **Ex:** If Jonah started in Victoria, God would have told him to go to Miami, FL. Jonah decided to go to Los Angeles.
- **In short, Jonah did the exact opposite of what God told him to do.** Called to go east, he went west. Directed to travel overland, he went to sea. Sent to the big city, he bought a one-way ticket to the end of the world.”

The question is, why would he do something like this? There are a couple of reasons why Jonah didn't want to obey God.

- First, the Ninevites were a wicked, violent people who showed their enemies no mercy. They would torture you, kill you, put your corpse on display, and later paint pictures to document their atrocities. “I'm not going to Nineveh. They slaughter people there,” may have seemed the practical choice from Jonah's perspective if we're being honest.
- The second reason Jonah disobeyed God is made clear in 4:1-2. He didn't want to preach to these people because he was afraid they might actually repent and be forgiven! Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrian Empire, and if its citizens were to escape God's judgment, they could eventually conquer Israel. So Jonah preferred to let God rain fiery wrath on them. He wanted them destroyed.
- All in all we see that this isn't necessarily an emotional response. This is a heart issue. Jonah could not have cared less about the other person, he was only concerned about himself. Selfishness at its deepest root.

The Heart of the issue: Jonah's deliberate rebellion against God begs the question that we all must ask. Do we truly desire to submit to God's will fully? The easy answer is yes, but only when his will sounds convenient.

- But what if God's will runs against your plans? If God had asked Jonah to go and preach repentance to his people (the 10 northern tribes), he would have said yes right away. That is where he wanted to be sent to.

Transition - The account of Jonah teaches us that refusing to submit to God's will has consequences.

Jonah 1:4-5 A Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **5** All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship...

These men were seasoned fishermen who would not have responded this way unless it was truly life or death...

Jonah 1:5b-9 ... But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. **6** The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." **7** Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" **9** He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD (Yahweh), the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Knowledge is no guarantee of obedience: Jonah knew what God's will for him in crystal clear detail. Yet knowing God's will and obeying God's will are not the same thing!

- It's easy for us to say yes when we have all of the information ahead of time. But when we don't have all the info or answers, we become hesitant or even disobedient.
- Jonah even acknowledged that his God (Yahweh) was the God of heaven and the seas. Yet he went and ran from this very God who was the creator and sustainer of all the earth. This is fear and doubt at it's finest.

Warning for us: Your knowledge is no guarantee of obedience. You can easily know much of sound doctrine and scripture, and still be walking in disobedience.

- Spiritual maturity and depth must be measured in obedience- not knowledge. And not even necessarily having the best answers in small group. Are you willing to live out the right answers?

Jonah 1:10-12 This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) **11** The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" **12** "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

Disobedience always brings storms: I am not trying to allegorize the account. In Jonah's case, the storms were quite literal. But make no mistake, disobedience to God's will always brings about storms. Disobedience never leads to anything productive or worthwhile.

- This also does not mean that every crisis is due to our disobedience; the book of Job disproves that.

Jonah 1:13-16 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. **14** Then they cried out to the LORD (Yahweh), "Please, LORD (Yahweh), do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." **15** Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. **16** At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

The Irony Hurts: The great irony is that Jonah did not want to preach to pagans and Gentiles. Yet, that is exactly what he did. This should serve as a lesson to us. If our agenda is to go against God's sovereign will, then it will fail every time.

- Obedience to the Lord should always be the first option taken, even if we don't have all of the answers.

Gospel Connection: In Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus compares himself to Jonah. There are multiple layers to this comparison. We will dive into each throughout this series. The first layer of the comparison is obvious in this scene. Jonah sacrificed himself to save others. He did so begrudgingly, unlike Jesus, who did so freely. Jonah's sacrifice calmed the storm. But Jesus' sacrifice dealt with the wrath of God, as our atonement. We see in the account of Jonah a typology, a type of Christ. Jesus was the better Jonah because he was the perfect sacrifice and atonement for our sins, once and for all.

Transition to small Group: Now you may be thinking, What does this have to do with me? God has never come to me and asked me to go to a foreign land and proclaim God's judgment. That may be true. But rebellion against God's will takes on many forms. Tonight, in small group, we are going to take a look at what it looks like to live in full submission to the will of God.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get them talking: Was there anything that stood out to you from the message?

How should Jonah's rebellion serve as a warning to us? In other words, what does it look like for us to make a similar mistake?

Leader Note: Here are a couple of thoughts.

- Anytime we choose our plans over God's will, we are making the same mistake as Jonah. Regardless of what it may be about.
- Anytime we view someone, or even a group of people, as beyond God's ability to redeem, we are making the same mistake as Jonah. ("They don't deserve Jesus because they upset me" or "because they're terrible people.")
- If we downplay our disobedience, then we are making the same mistake as Jonah. Sins of commission are when we do something God commanded us not to do (murder, lying, etc). Sins of omission are when we fail to do what God has commanded us to do (love our neighbor, show mercy, etc). While sins of omission may seem less serious to us, God does not take them lightly.

Transition: Tonight, and throughout the series, we are going to connect the parable of the Prodigal Son to the action of Jonah. We are going to see how we tend to act the same way that Jonah did, how to correct the disobedience, and understand what God says to us (and of us) in these moments.

READ Luke 15:11-16 together as a group

Vs 11-12: The younger son asked for his share of the inheritance before his father had died. This was unheard of at this time and would have been extremely disrespectful to the father. How did this young son view his Father? How did he view the inheritance?

Leader Note (Background info): The younger son wanted his share of his father's estate (inheritance). This would have been one-third of the total estate, with the older son receiving two-thirds, a double portion of the other as prescribed by the law (Deuteronomy 21:17). In most cases, the son would have received this at his father's death, although fathers sometimes chose to divide up their inheritance early and retire from managing their estates. What is unusual is that the younger son initiated the division of the estate. This showed arrogant disregard for his father's authority as head of the family.

Is it possible for us to view God, and interact with God, in a similar way as this young prodigal son? How do we know if we love God, or if we just love what He gives us?

Leader Note: Do we love God, or do we simply want God to give us what we want? It is easy for us to view God like the young son viewed the father- as a means to an end. How do we know if this is us? Wait until God tells you "no" or lays out a plan for you that you don't like. In those moments, our actions review the motives of our hearts.

The son's plan was to feed what he hoped would fulfill him, in his case, wild living. In the end, sin does what it always does; it promises much and delivers none of it. What are some specific sin patterns that appeal to us because they seem to promise joy, yet in the end, they leave us broken?

What is the comparison between the mistake that Jonah made and the prodigal son?

Leader Note: Simply put, both men chose rebellion. They both chose to run from God. Jonah rebelled against God's command to go and preach repentance to Nineveh. The prodigal son rebelled against God's command to honor your mother and father.

Sin has consequences. The prodigal son found himself in shameful financial ruin. Jonah nearly lost his life before God spared his life by having a whale swallow him whole. **Why is it important that we learn from our mistakes rather than running from God and letting shame take over?**

What are the lessons that we should learn from the rebellion of Jonah and the Prodigal Son?

Leader Note (Key lessons): We are unfortunately going to have moments where we fall very short before the Lord. There are going to be times where we are so ashamed of ourselves. The Lord will always make a redemptive path for His followers. He doesn't

want us to be defined by our worst mistake. He wants us to be obedient to Him because He always works for our good. Even in our frustrations, doubts, or worries we should always remember that He is a loving God who will never work for our opposition.

PRAY OUT

- Today's passages provide two very clear prayer prompts. 1) That we would pray for our own faith and that we would fully submit our will to God's. 2) To pray for those in our lives who have wandered far from God.